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ABSTRACT

The articles in this volume were written by teachers with an average of 15 years experience teaching writing from the primary grades through college. Each article is the fruition of one to three years work with students and teachers after a summer institute. The authors of the articles discuss such topics as (1) personal experiences as a teacher and writer; (2) an automotive analogy for the writing process--prewriting, drafting, editing, and publishing; (3) prewriting strategies to help students think, feel, and observe; (4) teaching paragraph focus and development; (5) revision as opposed to recopying; (6) teaching awareness of style; (7) how young children can identify with their favorite authors and publish; (8) activities for writing in math classes; (9) schoolwide writing assessment; and (10) resources for teachers. (HOD)

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**GATEWAY WRITING PROJECT**

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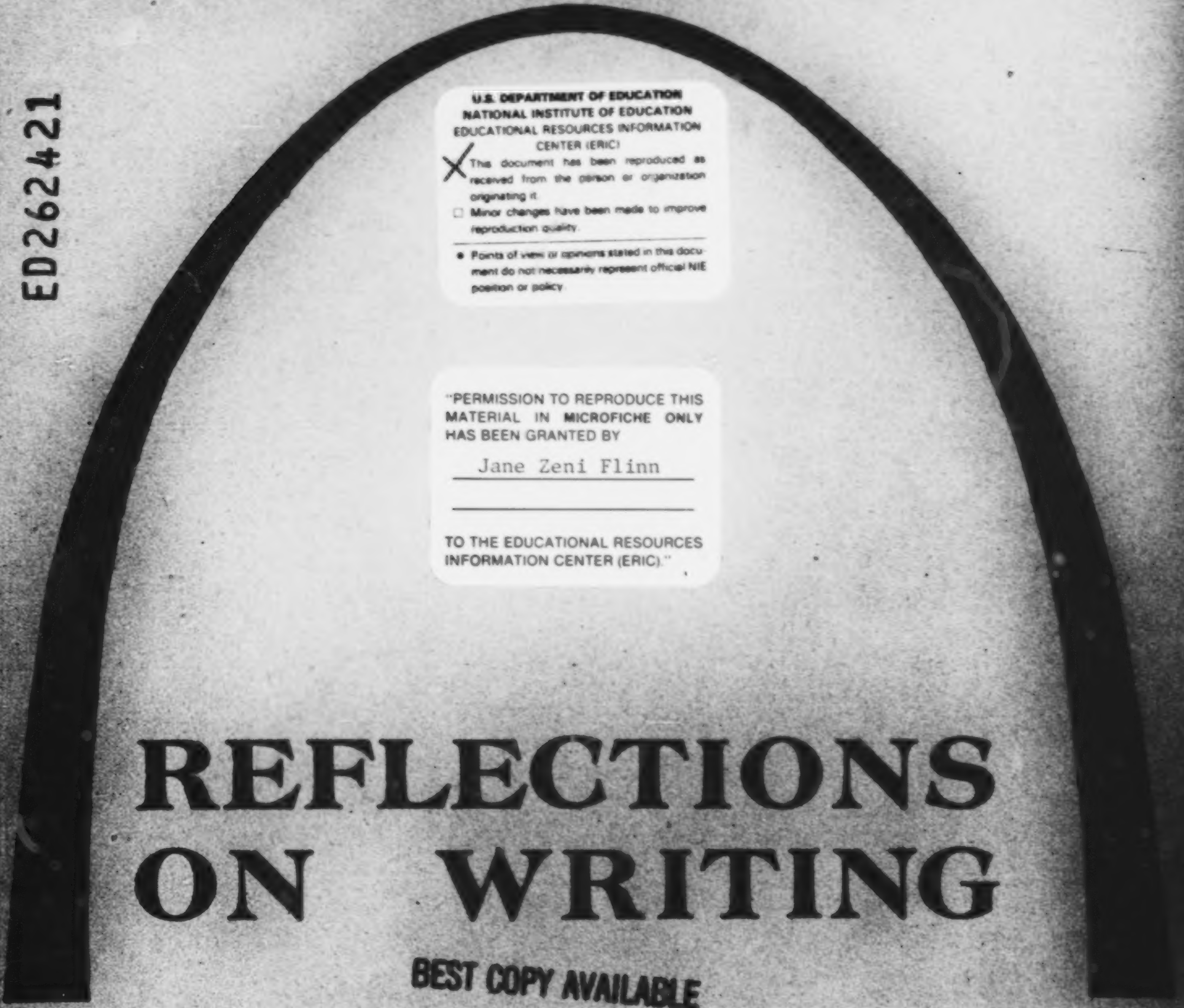

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# REFLECTIONS ON WRITING

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**JANE ZENI FLINN Editor**

CS 209 352

# REFLECTIONS ON WRITING

## PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FROM CLASSROOMS K-12

Gateway Writing Project

Edited by Jane Zeni Flinn

Published by the Gateway Writing Project
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1981

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# REFLECTIONS ON WRITING
## INTRODUCTION

In the past fifteen years, writing has been recognized, not as a set of fragmented skills, but as a basic mode of learning. A substantial body of knowledge is now available which suggests how students can learn to write effectively and confidently. Yet it is the negative side, the literacy crisis, that has received the most publicity in a rash of articles like Newsweek's "Why Johnny Can't Write" (Sheils, 1975*). Critics, teachers, and parents alike tend to agree that the condition of student writing is critical.

One reaction is to blame the patient--and Johnny does seem to have his problems. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one third of today's high school seniors would not have been students at all in 1950; the less affluent and less able conveniently dropped out. Children entering today's primary classes have been entertained by three to six hours a day of TV, prime time that might once have featured books (Fader, 1976, p. 24). Our schools face the challenge of a new student population. Amid pressure to "do something," the community may forget that returning to the methods of the fifties will not recreate the students of the fifties.

On the other hand, the results of the third National Assessment of Educational Progress (1980) suggest that the decline may have leveled off. During the past decade the writing abilities of most American students aged 9, 13, and 17 did not change significantly; the quality of expressive, persuasive, and explanatory writing showed minor ups and downs, while errors in mechanics and sentence structure remained stable. The most encouraging news was that black and disadvantaged urban teenagers began to close the gap in performance between themselves and the rest of the nation. Nevertheless, too many students (between 10% and 25% on various measures) continued to display very basic problems with written communication, and "minimum competency" is hardly an inspiring goal.

Many people react by blaming Johnny's teachers, but they have problems, too. The National Council of Teachers of English urges that a secondary teacher responsible for writing instruction have a maximum of 100 students; the typical U.S. English teacher has a classload of 130 to 150 students. Taking an average 8.6 minutes to respond to each paper, a teacher whose 150 students write a minimal theme-a-week will spend 21.5 hours per week just marking papers--not counting class preparation, testing, or coaching the school play. It is no wonder that many teachers assign fewer and fewer papers, relying on fill-in exercises and multiple choice tests. The College Entrance Examination Board suggests that one-third of a secondary English program be devoted to writing; the average in U.S. schools is less than 16%. (For details, see Squire and Applebee, 1970, pp. 3-5.) During the last decade, elementary school suppliers reported a significant decline in the consumption of lined paper--and a corresponding increase in orders for the blank paper used for dittoed worksheets (Graves, 1978, p. 31). Numerous surveys have named writing the weakest area of the language arts curriculum. Teachers need help.

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*Full references to all books and articles cited parenthetically will be found in the bibliography starting on page 89.

Unfortunately, most classroom teachers have never been trained to teach writing. In fact, until the last five years most schools of education did not even offer such training; a survey of 36 major universities unearthed a total of two courses in the teaching of writing! (Graves, 1978, p. 15). The major research on writing was not available to teachers in most academic libraries. So the conclusions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress should come as no surprise:

> Neither 13-year-olds nor 17-years-olds receive a great deal of direct instruction in writing or are required to do much writing in school. Very few appear to have access to a writing program that includes prewriting instruction, oral and written feedback on writing assignments, encouragement to write several drafts of papers and opportunities to rework papers after they have been reviewed by teachers.
>
> (N.A.E.P., 1980, p. 48)

In response to this need, the National Writing Project has grown from one center in 1974 (Berkeley's Bay Area Writing Project) to some 80 centers across the country, including St. Louis' Gateway Writing Project.

The project represents an unusual partnership between local school districts and universities. Districts send experienced classroom teachers to an intensive summer institute at the university. There, they encounter not one "right" method, but a body of theory and practice from which to draw their own conclusions and to create their own syntheses. In this way, they train as "teacher-consultants," returning to their schools to offer in-service workshops for their colleagues. Each teacher who attends a summer institute means about six more teachers reached through the in-service. And since teachers teach teachers, their solutions reflect the realities of large classloads, cluttered syllabi, and political pressures.

Gateway Writing Project began in 1978 under an Elementary and Secondary Education Act grant to ten St. Louis County public and parochial school districts. Four summer institutes have been led by Jane Zeni Flinn, first at Washington University and currently at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; as a result of the project, both universities now offer regularly scheduled courses in the teaching of writing. In 1981 the project was awarded Missouri state validation on the basis of holistic scoring of some 5000 pre- and post-test essays from the classrooms of trained teachers and comparison groups. The data, reported by grant directors Judith Shook and Joan Krater, showed that students of GWP teachers improved more in overall writing performance than their peers in other classes.

professional meetings, and leading workshops for teachers from the inner city to the Ozarks. In 1980 they published a book of strategies for the elementary classroom, Routes to Writing, K-6.

The present volume is the work of Gateway teacher-consultants with an average of 15 years' experience teaching in classrooms from the primary grades through college. Each article is the fruit of one to three years' work with students and teachers after the summer institute. The essays reflect each writer's synthesis of past experience with new research and new strategies. The authors applied to their own writing the same strategies they have been teaching their students, meeting in small groups or sharing by mail to get feedback and rework their articles. This book, then, is the product of an extensive process of peer editing.

Beverly Bimes, the 1980 National Teacher of the year, shares her personal journey from burnout to a rebirth of confidence as teacher and writer. Margaret Hasse and Georgia Archibald contribute a graphic sequence, an automotive analogy for the writing process--prewriting, drafting, editing, and publishing. The rest of the volume is organized according to these basic processes. Marcia Block, John Weiss, and Connie Williams offer prewriting strategies to help students think, feel, and observe. To teach drafting, Marilyn Dell'Orco explains paragraph focus and development, while Cathy O'Donnell and Joan Krater show how to revise, not merely recopy. Elizabeth Krekeler teaches an awareness of style through a new look at an old editing kit: the parts of speech. Jacque Wuertenberg and Clara McCrary show how even young children can identify with their favorite authors and publish. The composing process goes across the curriculum with Jerry Kennedy's activities for writing in math classes and Anne Wright's report on schoolwide writing assessment. Jane Zeni Flinn concludes the volume with a bibliographic essay, an extensive list of resources, and a map to help teachers find their way through the bibliography.

The authors differ in the grade levels they teach, in their styles of teaching, and in their styles of writing. But each article captures a "Eureka!" moment, a moment of quiet reflection when it all made sense, when theory and practice came together, when a teacher could articulate "how and why it works for me."

Jane Zeni Flinn
Co-Director, GWP
University of Missouri-St. Louis

# REVIVAL OF A TEACHER

Beverly Bimes
Hazelwood East High School
Lindenwood Colleges

As we gathered at the White House in the Roosevelt Room, the air was charged with excitement. Could it be possible that in the next few minutes my family and friends were really going to meet the President and the Vice-President of the United States? Could it even be feasible that a former "burned out" teacher, who was going to leave the profession just two short years ago, was now going to be honored as the 1980 National Teacher of the Year?

With an official kiss from President Carter, with words of praise from Vice-President Mondale, and with the presentation of the coveted award, a crystal apple, my disbelief. . .my questions were suddenly quieted and lost in reality. What a moment! Gazing into the pristine clearness of the apple, I saw the reflection of a proud educator celebrating her achievements and her teacher renewal, and I relived those dramatic, life-changing years—beginning with a beleaguered teacher fervently seeking an escape from her profession.

When school ended three years ago, I was determined that I would not return to teaching. At that time, I wrote an essay entitled "Teaching--A Profession in Exodus." The opening paragraph began:

> As the bell rang signaling the end of another exhausting week, Jill Jackson sat at her cluttered desk and pried her shoes off her swollen, aching feet. A poster from a nearby bulletin board shouted its message to her--"No one said teaching was going to be easy!" Feeling discouraged, she picked up the classified section of the daily newspaper and began to think about herself in terms of marketable skills for a new vocation.

I was Jill Jackson--a professional educator whose career was flickering to an end; I had all of the symptoms of a teacher burnout. I felt overworked, underpaid, unappreciated, and unexcited. When Ann Morrow Lindbergh, in Gift from the Sea, compared herself to a pitcher who had poured out willingly and freely for years but who feared that she was reaching the point of becoming dangerously empty because she had never been replenished or refilled, I empathized with her, for my pitcher had not been replenished in years.

Discouraged and disillusioned, I decided to pursue my second undergraduate major--biology; therefore, I investigated master's programs in microbiology. I came to the conclusion that agar cultures, microscopes, and slides could provide me with the serenity I needed. In fact, the preciseness the seclusion of the laboratory, with the obvious absence of human protoplasm, was becoming my view of an ideal lifestyle.

After I expressed these views to my department chairperson, she assured me that I was a teacher and probably wouldn't be happy with another profession. She handed me an announcement about a summer workshop--the Gateway Writing Project--and encouraged me to give teaching one more try. Thinking that I would take advantage of a system which had drained me, I decided to enroll, my plan being to get six free hours of graduate credit and a stipend and then to exit the profession.

The 1978 summer institute, however, had a profound effect upon me. One of its most rewarding aspects was that it made me encounter my teaching self. In spite of my avoidance tactics of hiding my multi-colored grading pen, of attempting to escape the haunting faces of my students, and of pretending I didn't care, I had to answer the questions, "Why had I chosen teaching as a profession? Why had I devoted so many years to it?"

The interaction with twenty-seven dynamic and diverse teachers (including everything from an "egotistical bastard"--a self-imposed label--to an ex-nun who had done penance to develop humility) gave me the medium through which to answer these troublesome questions. While reading intently, while listening to their varied philosophies and concerns for education, while sharing strategies, and while basking in the luxury of having the time to grow as a professional, I found a change taking place. I was encountering, digesting, accepting, rejecting, modifying, and assimilating--all active processes; all active verbs. For a teacher who was dying, it was a source of excitement. My professional pride was being rekindled; I was proud to be a part of this group--these warm, brilliant, energetic teachers! The discoveries that I made that summer were vital to my survival as a teacher.

First of all, I discovered that I was a teacher because I had internalized one of the lessons which I attempt to teach my students. Whenever my students read The Crucible, we investigate the identity crisis which the tragic hero, John Proctor, faces throughout the play. His troublesome question is, "Am I responsible for only my own well being, or am I responsible for the society in which I live?" Although Proctor dies at the end of the play, there is a spiritual triumph because he finds himself and the answer to his question--humans are responsible for the society in which they live. Hating apathy, which is often characteristic of our society, I suddenly realized this was one reason for my being a teacher. Every day in the workshop, I listened to my newly-found colleagues share stories about how teachers make a difference and how they care about their students. I remembered why I had chosen teaching as a profession.

During the summer, I also discovered that if I were going to survive, I would have to keep my teaching career in the right perspective and to get in touch with myself. Although I had always deemed the study of self a legitimate classroom activity for my students, I had denied myself this same vital activity. One reason why I felt so drained was that teaching usurped my entire life even to the point where I had faked an answer on a yearbook survey of staff members concerning leisure activities. Who were they kidding? When did I have any leisure moments; I was an English teacher! I didn't think it would be too exciting for my students to read in their yearbooks that I spent all my time grading their papers; therefore, I listed reading and writing—failing to mention that it was students' papers I was reading and that my writing consisted of comments on their papers.

I was attempting to be a teacher in the role of a person, and it wasn't working. I desperately needed to find out who Bev Bimes was as a person. Abraham Maslow sees self-knowledge as a major means toward growth and actualization leading to greater creativity, a less-distorted perception of reality, and greater freedom. Since I denied myself this right of self-knowledge, I was being victimized by a type of psychological bondage: it was impossible to live up to my expectations of what a teacher should be—my teacher myth—and to be a person with time for myself. I accepted the fact that I was a person in the role of a teacher, and that there was nothing wrong with this. I began to look at my expectations more realistically, to look at alternative responses, to investigate my goals and priorities. The summer workshop was particularly helpful in offering strategies and theories which released me from teacher behaviors that were productive neither to teaching nor to learning. For the first time in years, I did things I wanted to do without feeling guilty. I ran; I wrote, I read; I lost my martyr complex. As a result, I knew I was going to be a better teacher--I was renewed! I was not less dedicated, but I was more in touch with myself and definitely a happier person. Everything I wrote during the workshop that summer was a catharsis; writing became a way of discovering who I was as a person.

As a result of my experiences in the Gateway Writing Project, I decided to stay with teaching and to fight; I definitely was not going to switch. Through the success stories of other writing projects across the country, I came to the conclusion that teachers were the logical ones to do educational research. My first way of fighting was to develop a total school writing project when I returned to school the next fall in order to show the public that teachers were striving to improve and were capable of leadership in their own profession. The realization that I could no longer afford the luxury of waiting for someone else to save my profession. . .that I could really make a difference. . .and that I had a concrete tool to work with--total school writing—was the shot of Geritol I needed for my teacher-tired blood.

The Gateway Writing Project awakened me to the reality of what can happen when a teacher discovers her dormant potential and rediscovers the joy of teaching. But it also has shaped my perception of the crystal apple. As I take the crystal apple from its permanent resting place, the dining room hutch, and as I gaze into its pristine clearness once again, I no longer see a lone educator in an isolated White House setting, glowing in the warmth of her own achievements, but I see a myriad of dynamic teachers continually striving to grow as professionals and to help others. They are all Teachers of the Year in their own right, and I am basking in their achievements. It is their successes, their courage, and their determination which have made the crystal apple and my profession so very special to me.

# WRITING IS LIKE . . . DESIGNING A CAR

Margaret Hasse
Edgar Road School, Webster Groves

As I struggled through that hot summer of the 1980 Gateway Writing Project, I was swamped and almost submerged, but refreshed, by the continuous stream of ideas swirling around in my consciousness. I knew that I wanted to take the main idea--The Writing Process--back to my sixth graders in September. I wanted a meaningful—a graphic—way to present this idea in relation to their world.

Although my desire to translate the writing process into an analogy was intuitive, I found ample research to substantiate my feelings. As William J. Gordon states in his introduction to Synectics (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), "Metaphor introduces conceptual distance between the individual and the subject. It provides the freedom and the structure for seeing familiar situations in new contexts and from new viewpoints." And conversely, writers can integrate a new concept into awareness by identification with a more familiar experience. As a learner I have always found that images stimulate and clarify my thinking; as a teacher I have found that my children get excited about figurative language, and love to create their own.

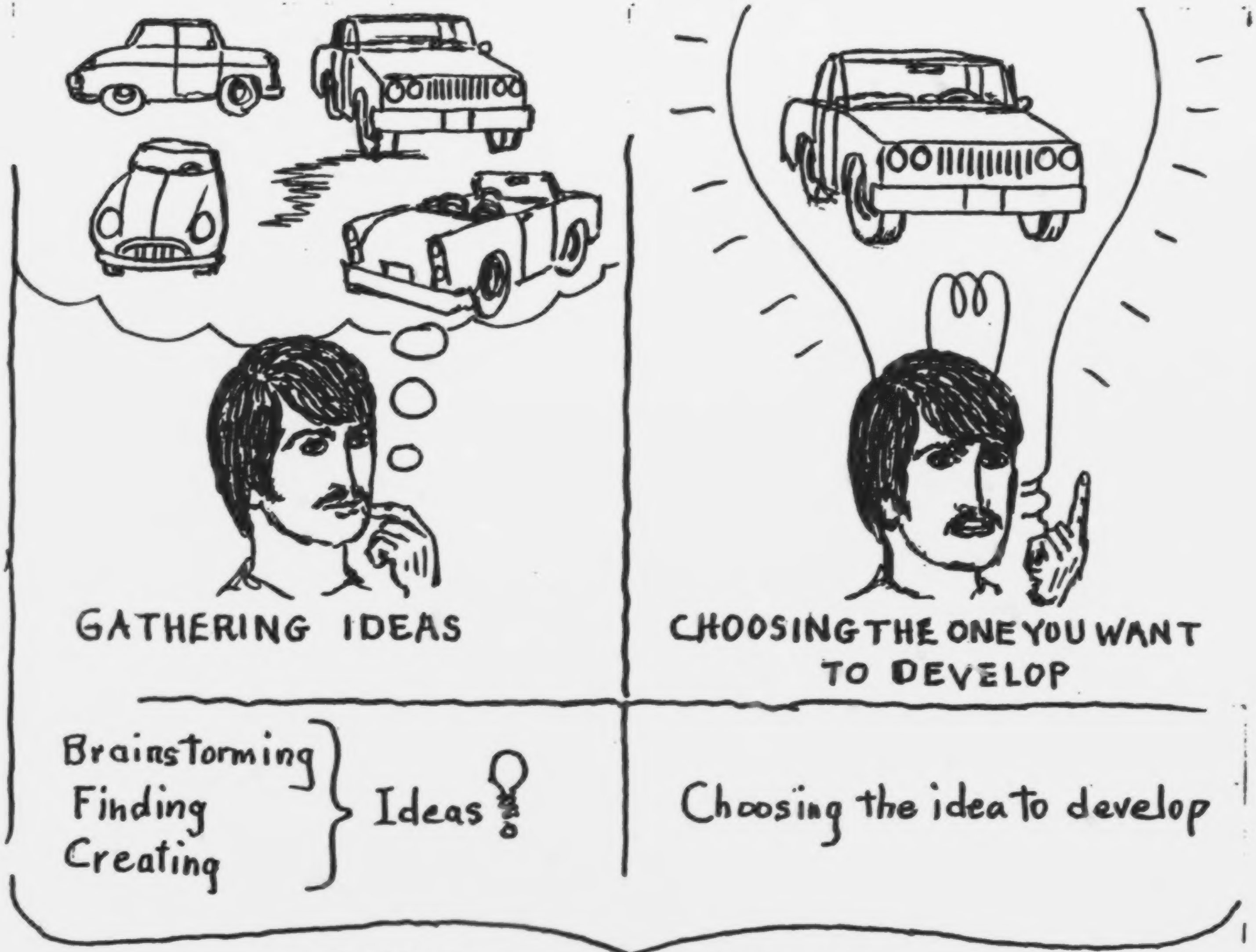
So I brainstormed to find an analogy for the writing process. After all, every activity involves a process . . . baking, gardening, painting, sewing . . . but how could the steps be paralleled with writing?

AHAH! Sewing, with its many fittings and alterations. . . . So, with the help of my colleague and peer editor, Georgia Archibald, this analogy began to develop. We soon decided to discard sewing in favor of a model that would be more exciting to our students . . . designing an automobile.

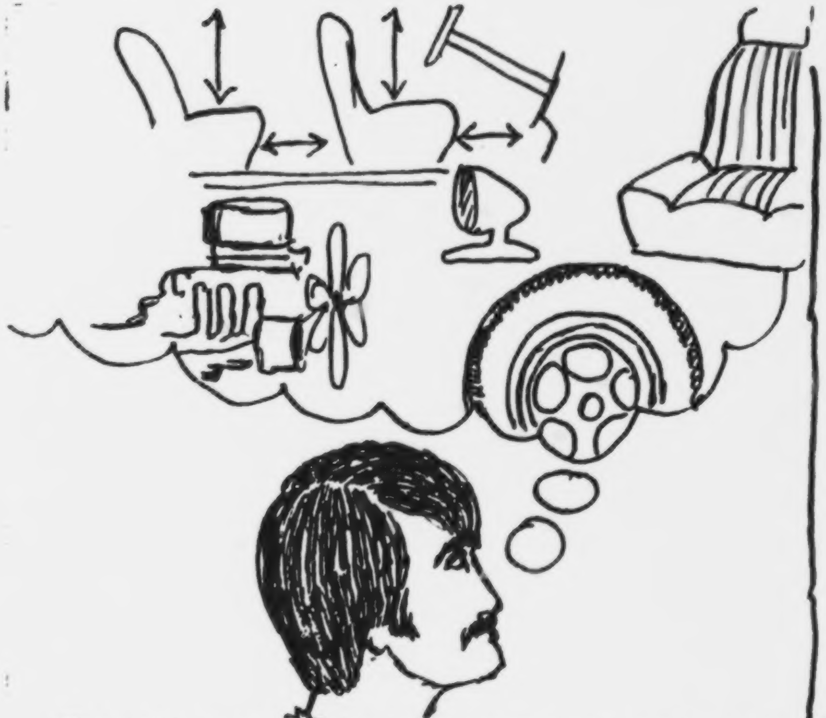
As we well know, the writing process can not be divided into hard and fast locked-tight steps, but flows unrestrainedly in many directions at the most unpredictable of times. And yet--to coin another analogy--we felt children need to be aware that in any area they must begin with a seed, and progress through the cultivating, the watering, the weeding, and the hoeing, before the potential flower can burst into bloom. And this creation must be under continuous scrutiny, so that the gardener, co-workers, and various horticultural experts can determine its needs, before the exquisite bouquet can be displayed.

Here then, after many hours spent in searching for the most appropriate words, is our finished product, a model of the writing process that originally appeared on twenty-two feet of art paper stretched across the wall of a classroom.

# The WRITING PROCESS

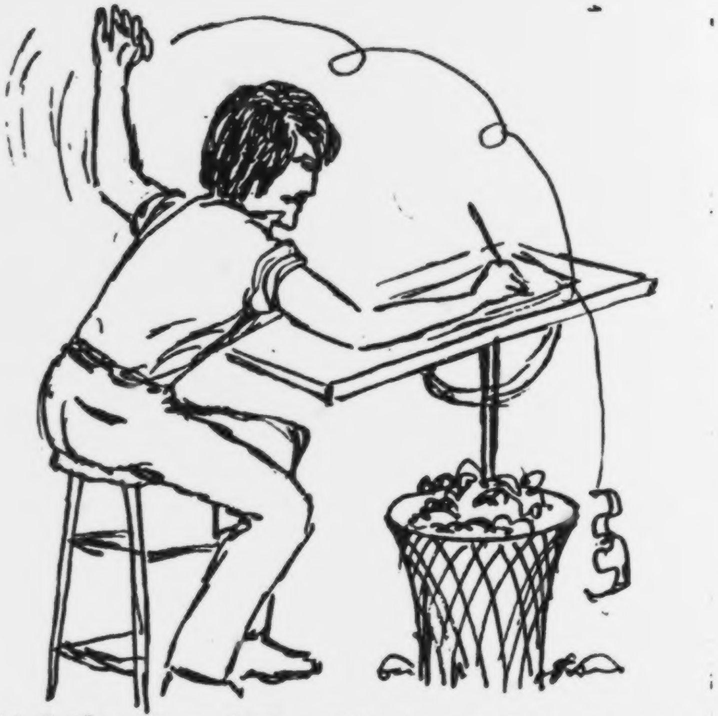

GATHERING IDEAS
CHOOSING THE ONE YOU WANT TO DEVELOP
Brainstorming
Finding
Creating
Ideas
Choosing the idea to develop

# PRE-WRITING



FOCUSING ON FEATURES TO INCLUDE

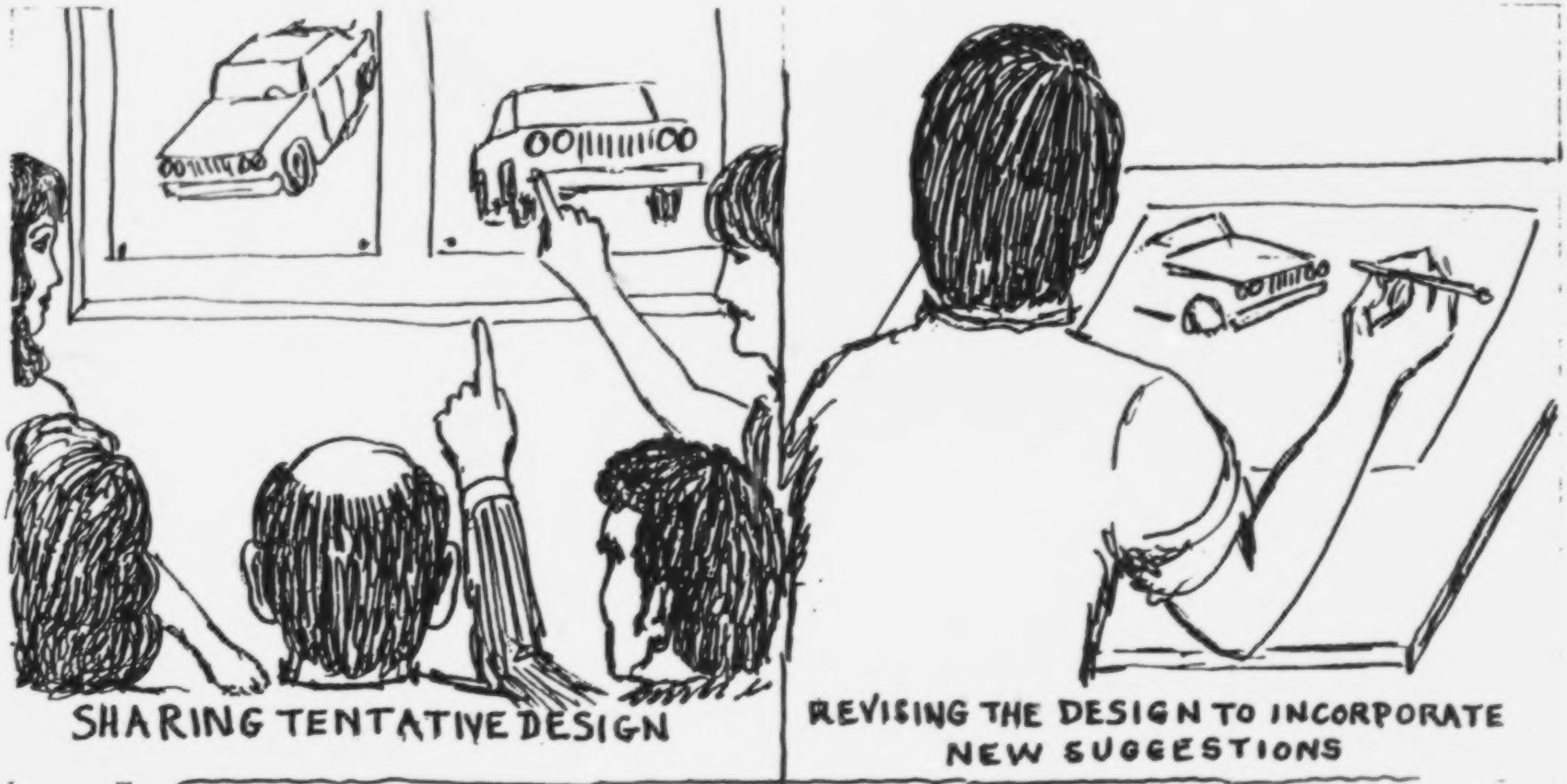
Focusing ideas and details



DESIGNING CAR, EACH THROWAWAY LEADING TO BETTER DESIGN

Experimenting with first draft

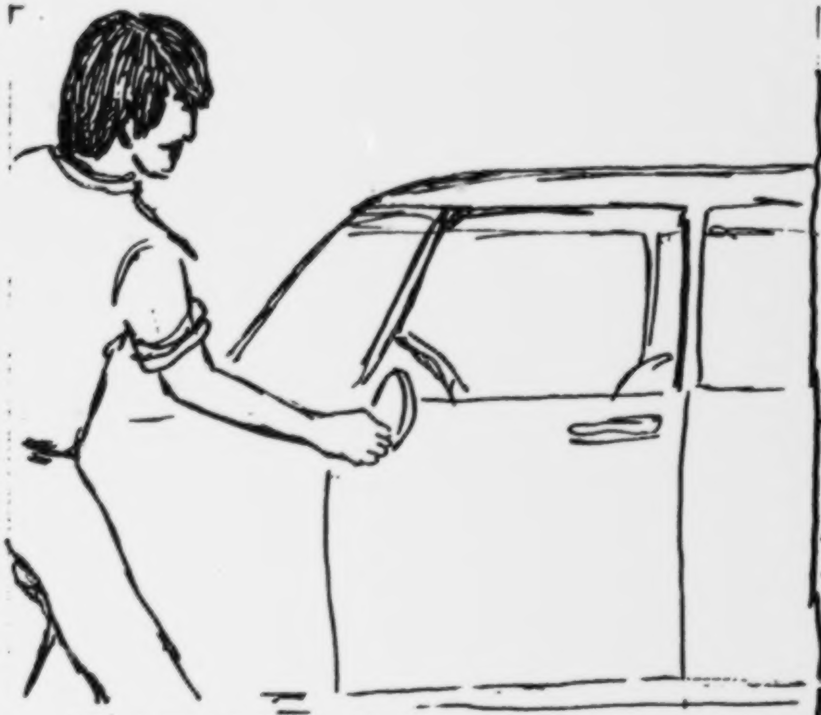
# DRAFTING


SHARING TENTATIVE DESIGN
REVISING THE DESIGN TO INCORPORATE NEW SUGGESTIONS

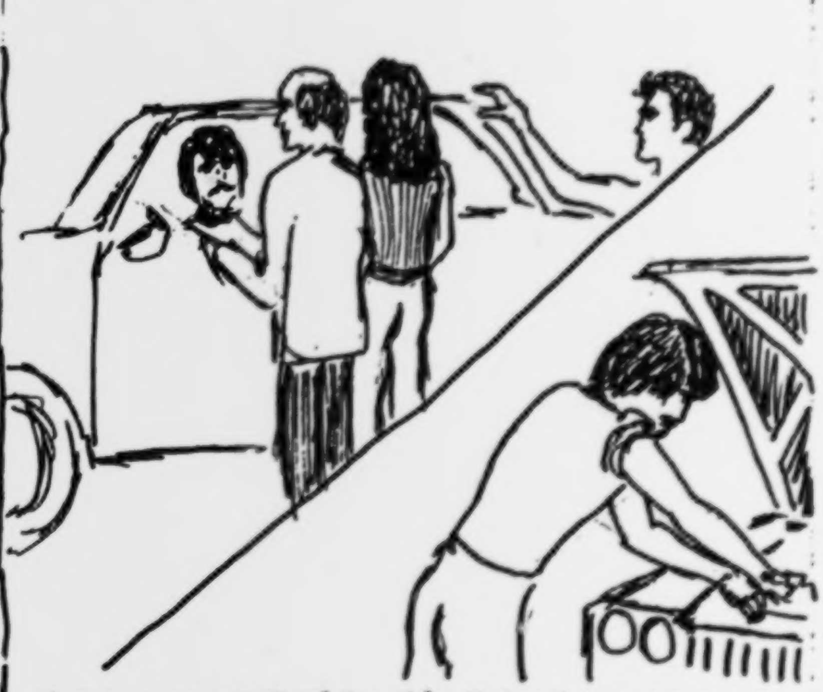
Sharing first draft

Revising first draft

DRAFTING



PRODUCING PROTOTYPE AS A TRIAL MODEL

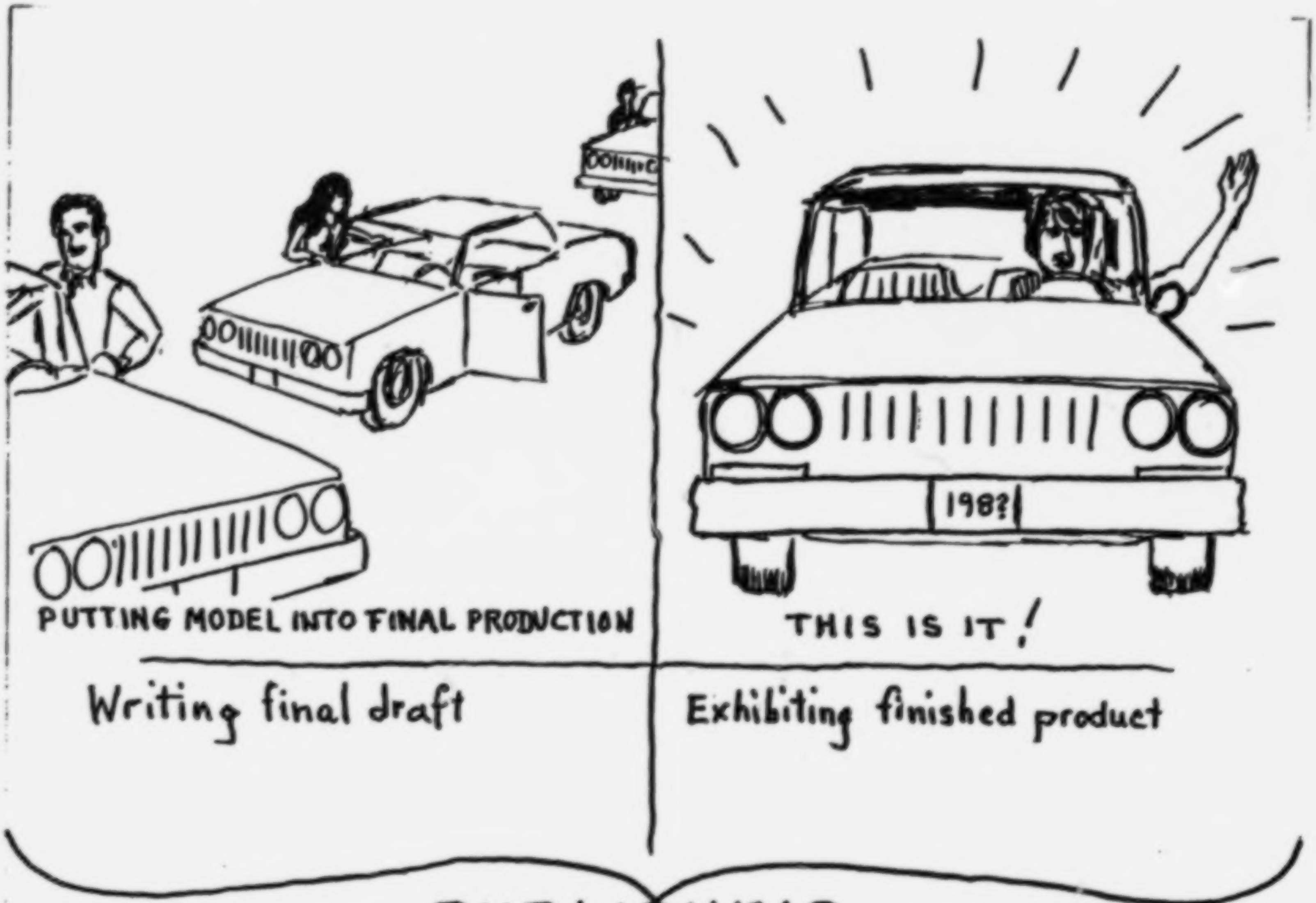


FIELD TESTING—WORKING OUT THE MECHANICAL BUGS

Clarifying second draft

Peer proofreading and polishing

# EDITING


PUTTING MODEL INTO FINAL PRODUCTION
THIS IS IT!
198?
Writing final draft
Exhibiting finished product

PUBLISHING

Georgia Archibald
Margaret Hasse
Carl Hasse, Illustrator

# PRODUCTIVE DELAY--PREWRITING AND EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

Marcia Block
Pattonville High School

Whether we call it invention, discovery, or prewriting, finding something to say--worse yet, something worth saying--is a writer's first struggle. Over the years we English teachers have tried to give our students that "something to say" by discussing an issue in class, by assigning readings on a subject, or by analyzing literature. Then when we get the same old papers we wind up with the same old frustrations.

Those disappointing papers often fall into two categories written by the two painfully familiar types of students Donald Murray describes in "Write Before Writing" (1978): the "bad" students who sit, stare, perhaps doodle, and give up, and the "good" students who "smugly pass their papers in before the end of the period" (p. 375). Murray raises some serious questions about those "good" students, citing the professional's habit of delay while preparing to write. He suggests that we may "need to force many of our glib, hair-trigger student writers to slow down, to daydream, to waste time" (p. 380). When we encourage too rapid writing are we not forcing even our good students to write the banal, superficial papers we decry?

Yet if I simply give my students more time, whether minutes or days, many of them tune out and fail to use their time productively. Janet Emig, in a lecture to Gateway Writing Project participants (St. Louis, 1979), described an experiment in which she watched the behavior of students during pauses in their writing. Skilled and unskilled writers paused in totally different ways, she reported. Watching their eyes revealed that the skilled writers were rereading; their concentrated expressions showed they were thinking about how to develop their points. The others, like Murray's "bad" writers, were staring blankly into space.

One way of both delaying the glib ones and prodding the starers is through prewriting activities. Of course we can't simply *assign* prewriting. If asked to go out and "really" observe a tree or a sunset or whatever, most students only go through the motions and see little but the obvious. A common problem, I think, is that even many "good" students don't understand the nature of the thinking that makes for good writing and don't understand how to slow down productively. Prewriting activities work best when they are brought into the classroom. Students can be led step by step to encounter an apple through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Or they can improvise a confrontation between parent and teen--and then write a paper about their feelings. Yet often, prewriting activities seem to be designed for narrative or expressive writing. Describing apples or playing roles won't seem too relevant to my twelfth grade college preparatory class. My problem, then, is to find thought-provoking prewriting activities to spark expository essays.

The students who most need help in understanding this part of the writing process are probably the ones most intimidated by the written models so often used in composition classes--no wonder, since they compare their feeble efforts with masterpieces. One of my solutions has been to start with visual stimuli instead of textbook models. My less skillful writers are often interested in visual media, and respond by doing the thinking and analyzing that will give them "something to say." In addition, I believe in modelling the processes I myself might go through in exploring and then writing about a subject. In this way, the group experience serves as a model for developing the individual papers.

In teaching comparison and contrast, for example, I decided to use two paintings, Pieter Bruegel's *Children's Games* and Ben Shahn's *Handball*. We spent most of one class period looking at and discussing the paintings as I displayed them in turn on an opaque projector. I tried to guide students first to specific details, jotting their comments on the board. In Bruegel's painting they pointed out the vast number of children as well as the trees, the small creek, and the low fences which were a part of the children's play. Then they noted the stark white court surrounded only by dull brick buildings and gray sky in Shahn's painting. When we returned to Bruegel, the blue sky and green grass now stood out in contrast with Shahn's bleakness. The children's random games contrasted with the organized handball game, too. To my surprise, some of the most intent and perceptive people were my blank-stare "bad" students. Normally one bright but passive boy slouched and rarely commented even when called on; now he leaned forward and volunteered observations. Gradually we started to draw conclusions from the details. One person would suggest and another would qualify. The next day we came back to the material, looked at the paintings again, and tried to formulate suggestions for a paper on either or both paintings.

What had started out as a minor exercise went far beyond my expectations in both length and complexity. One girl, an excellent artist herself, argued for the superiority of Shahn's painting because its social commentary had more to say to her. Most chose to concentrate on topics like the artists' use of color or the differing relationships between man and his world. Overall, the quality of thought and the thoroughness of concrete support were high in these papers. What I mean by delay should be clear. The glib students couldn't start writing too soon, and the others had something to say since their delay had been productive rather than empty.

Another visual prewriting activity was based on the short film "Omega," a puzzling exercise in special effects, reminding the viewer of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The assignment was to develop a thesis about the film and support it with specific details. I chose "Omega" hoping its strangeness would encourage originality rather than cliches. We watched the film, discussed our divergent first impressions, and then watched it again. During each viewing--six in all over the next week--my students and I took notes. Each time we tried to check our hasty first impressions, rejecting, refining, and clarifying. I did nudge them with general questions about the role of the music, the use of color, the apparent contradictions, and the theme of the film.

Some of the most thoughtful and carefully written papers of the year came from this assignment. One girl reported rereading the biblical Revelation three times as she worked on an extremely detailed comparison of book and film. Two students taped the soundtrack so they could listen to the music (there is no dialogue) over and over and analyze how it contributed to our understanding of the film. I wish I could say that all the students really went through the entire thinking process and not just the form, but there were some who clung stubbornly to their hasty first impressions and tried to force support. Predictably, these papers were poor and their writers unhappy with the assignment.

The brainstorming, the debating, the repeated rechecking of data to see if the interpretations are indeed supportable--all these are steps a proficient writer goes through automatically. Yet how can a beginning writer learn to do them if she doesn't see how they are done? And how can a beginner understand that writing tends to be slow and painful for everyone and not fast and easy for everyone but himself if he doesn't see that too? So to demonstrate, I did every step of the "Omega" assignment with my students and shared with them what I had done and why--complete with the false starts and rejections. During the editing stage I traveled from group to group sharing my rough draft too. Although they all groaned when I forced the last viewing or two on them, many later admitted understanding what I had been after. And the cognitive skills I had tried to teach continued to develop. By the end of the year I could tell from their papers on literature that students were getting in the habit of taking notes and rereading and rethinking--that they were taking time to think instead of jumping to conclusions.

Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, in "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem" (1980), object to the term discovery for the creative process. As they say, "Writers don't find meanings, they make them" (p. 21). The failure to understand that, they theorize, "leads the poor writer to give up too soon and the fluent writer to be satisfied with too little" (p. 22). Telling students to think, telling them that meanings are made, is important--but it isn't enough. The student who stares and gives up won't know any better how to work. The glib student won't know how to go beyond the hasty cliches either. Only by repeatedly showing students how this internal work is done can we build the understanding and the habit of thought which will help them in this crucial prewriting stage and will make their delay productive.

NOTE: An earlier version of this paper was delivered at "Conversations on Writing," a conference sponsored by the Greater St. Louis English Teachers' Association, Oct. 25, 1980.

# JOURNALS WITH A FOCUS

John Weiss
Lindbergh High School

Journals—glorious stream of consciousness—indulge in (s)wordplay maybee—I I I ay ay ay cha cha cha—and you dont need to worry about punctuation or speling and you don't even need to worry about "you" . . . But I worry about me. My mind is filled with scorpions. I'm worthless. Life has no meaning. I think I'm going crazy, drowning in a maelstrom of alienation. Somebody help me. . . Is this what I'm supposed to be writing about for the journal assignment, Teach?

Maybe the "idea" of journal writing appeals to you as a jacuzzi for loosening a writer's tight muscles. It provides a forum for insightful flashes and serendipity. It serves as a testing ground for writers to hear themselves talk. All well and good.

But you have qualms. Your classroom experiments with journal writing enabled your few adept writers to soar into sometimes magical, sometimes unintelligible, modes of expression. The other kids? Vast hordes flailed aimlessly or figured you wanted something creative like "leaves tossing to and fro in the freeze"—and wrote exactly that. Worse, several quiet students unburdened themselves of hate, doubt and guilt with self-revealing monologues from A Chorus Line. Journal writing seems too free, an unfocused escape into mellow navel contemplation, and you want prewriting to get out of the hot tub. What's more, you're a writing teacher, not a psychiatrist.

I too had this fear of flotsam from journal writing, yet I felt the need for journals as a tool in the writing process. My recourse has been focused journals, those which provide students with a center of attention to engage their minds. I have found my students have more success practicing their writing and thinking with the guidance of these focused journals.

Focused journal writing assignments may help reduce your fear of compositional bedlam without sapping student creativity. These entries serve as preludes to developing the kids' awareness of specific rhetorical skills: audience, point of view, process as a strategy, selective details, and the like. As a heuristic, the focused journal lets students explore limited topics without the pressing need to have any particular idea culminate in a polished paper. However, students discover (Eureka!) in these prewriting explorations some strategies they can apply when they do begin to draft their papers. In addition, focused journal assignments calm the writing angst of average students who cannot handle carte blanche immediately. Meanwhile, the zealous, self-priming students welcome the change-of-pace opportunity to do their thinking in selective doses.

With the suggestions below, I explain how you might assign each entry and which rhetorical skills you can expect students to pick up. In practice, try to keep assignments oral and brief. You don't need to discuss--or even mention--the skills involved. That can come later in conferences, in group work, or with assignment of papers.

BACK TALK: Students listen to tv or radio and react out loud, writing verbatim what they say. They might agree or argue or harangue the set. The resulting monologue can provide students with insight into arguing persuasively, establishing a consistent voice, and using dialogue.

IMITATION: This assignment is best done in three parts. First, the student listens to, and jots down, speech patterns of any one person--phrasing, colloquialisms, pauses. Then the student records a second speaker. The third journal entry is an impromptu dialogue between the two "characters" about a topic like the weather. The student tries to keep the two voices distinct. Aside from discovering how dialogue can be constructed, the kids can focus on style, on the relationship between spoken language and written language.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: The purposely-drab subject matter of this seven-entry journal assignment is what-I-did-at-school-today. The instruction for the first entry is simple: Jot down what happened at school today. This entry provides the basic content for the next six days' entries: Now tell the same stuff to a different audience each day--your grandma, your six-year-old brother, your friend in another school, your dog, someone you want to impress about yourself and your school, a jury. When students aren't sidetracked trying to juggle audience, topic development, argument, and several other guidelines for a full-fledged paper, an intuitive awareness of audience can surface.

WHOSE VIEWS?: Related to audience is point of view. Focused journal entries--in this case, two series of entries--can help. Each entry in the first series responds to one of these questions: What do you think of your parents? What do you think of your grandparents? What do you think of me? What do you think of yourself? This single viewpoint switches in the second series; the writer is put in the spotlight, answering these questions: What do your parents think of you? What do your grandparents think of you? What do the kids in class think of you? What do I think of you? What do you think now of yourself as a ten-year-old? Each of these spotlights on the one writer produces different shadows, the essence of point of view.

POINTS IN TIME: While most journal entries foster flitting from this to that in abandoned free-association, this one literally focuses on one act: an ice cube melting, toast toasting, a toilet bowl cleaner at work, a glass of soda bubbling, shadows on a trashcan lid. Students concentrate their observations on one relatively slow and/or simple event, writing about what happens at intervals in the process. Such prolonged particularity sparks the brain waves of kids used to the evanescent images on tv. After such scrutiny, typical process papers are a relief.

**FORGOTTEN WORLDS:** The remaining assignments help students discover the effectiveness of selective details. I try to confront the kids with an alien environment. (It's surprising how many environments are alien to teenagers!) This new unfamiliarity has a heuristic value even greater than seeing-the-familiar-in-a-new-light. The kids' minds grope intuitively for ways to talk about things or places for which they have no vocabulary. Metaphors and analogies come into being. So does technical differentiation.

**SHOPPING AROUND:** The content source for this assignment is a department store, discount store, or shopping mall. Students choose places they've never shopped in and write about them: shops or departments offering clocks, plumbing supplies, kitchen gadgets, lingerie, infants' wear, pipe tobacco.

**VARIETY STORE:** This entry makes students observe closely and note subtle differences. Each entry is limited to one kind of item (paneling, hinges, concrete blocks, blenders, lawn sprinklers) that the student has never shopped for. Observations stress specific variations in a category--shades of classification. Feel the textures of several grades of plywood and record the differences. All steak knives are not created equal!

**SELDOM SEEN PLACES:** Many kids have looked under the hood of a car. How many have been/seen inside a clothes dryer or mailbox? a doorbell or doghouse? behind draperies? under a sink? down a drain? They might discover more than rhetorical skills.

**VANTAGE POINTS:** Look at the same old places from a new angle. The kitchen from the top of a ladder, the yard from the roof, the yard from a neighbor's yard, the family room at crawl level, the writer's room upside down. This last one is achieved by simply lying on the floor and tilting the head back slightly. Some students prefer the comfort (?!) of lying across the bed, head dangling over the side. Students notice how the spaciousness of the ceiling dominates even a cluttered room, how linear perspective is more pronounced at chairleg level, how ordinary doors start to resemble the watertight, raised-threshold doors found on ships.

**NOT QUITE ALL THERE:** Journal entries include reactions to watching tv with no sound, listening to tv with no picture, listening to a record at slow speed or low/no volume, leafing through a book or magazine held upside down to obscure the message, writing with an unsharpened pencil.

These focused assignments can be tiny stimulants for the right side of the brain, the side that Thomas Blakeslee, in his book The Right Brain, (New York: Doubleday, 1980), feels has been neglected by educators. This center for creativity, holistic thinking, and intuitive flashes of insight is an untapped resource. Janet Emig suggests this resource, the side of

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"invention," can be tapped with assignments in which writers explore something they haven't already fixed in their minds or recorded on paper (see Cooper and Odell, 1978, pp. 59-71). Focused journal writing, a propitious time for the sparks of insight, can use right brain energy to help students acquire the rhetorical skills of the complementary left brain.

With luck and focused journal assignments, a student writer might end up with a freshness akin to Keats' first encounter with Chapman's Homer.

# JOURNALS: BETTER WRITING, BETTER RAPPORT

Connie Williams
Rosati-Kain High School, Archdiocese of St. Louis

During the summer of 1978 I participated in the Gateway Writing Project for the purpose of gaining new insight into the teaching of writing. One of the methods suggested at the seminar was the use of daily journals in the classroom. This type of writing activity apparently promoted good descriptive writing, clarified thinking, and loosened up the student for more advanced essay writing.

After two years of journal use I can happily report that satisfactory results have occurred in these cognitive areas. In addition, an even more satisfying phenomenon has occurred in the affective domain of learning: better rapport with the students. In fact, my relationship with the classes of students with whom I require journal writing has improved dramatically.

I believe there are several reasons why journal writing is rewarding from a psychological point of view. For one thing, fourteen to seventeen year old students are emotionally vulnerable. They may encounter repeated rejections: from home, in the classroom, and with their peer groups. Their self-esteem is normally in need of positive reinforcement. However, many students are reluctant to verbalize their concerns to a counselor or parent. They feel threatened or embarrassed when presented with a face-to-face encounter. This is where journal writing can be a valuable aid. By putting their ideas and concerns on paper, most students are able to be more open and direct.

One example I can cite is an excerpt from the journal of Mary T. (not her real name). Mary wrote on April 2, 1980:

> Mrs. Williams, I know I have been hard to get along with lately. Also, my grades are slipping. I've had so much on my mind since my Dad and Mom split up last Jan. She hates him and doesn't want me to talk to him. If I try to see him, she screams at me. I don't know what to do--I don't want to take sides. I mostly feel depressed all the time.

Obviously, there was no easy response I could give this student. We did talk about several options, including the possibility of Mary getting counseling in order to help her cope with the domestic problems that she had to face. On April 28, I read the following entry:

> Mrs. Williams, thanks for letting me unload on you. You were right—it does help to put your feelings on paper. Things are still touchy at home, but I now think I can handle it better. I realize

> that I'm not responsible for my parents' problems. I know I can make it through high school and will have my own life to look forward to.

Mary proved to me what I have long believed--teenagers do need a "significant other" in their lives, someone they can depend on to care about them.

Problems ranging from disappointment with a grade to fear of an unwanted pregnancy have been presented to me in journals. Obviously, all problems need to be dealt with on an individual basis. No pat answer will suffice in most cases. Some entries can be handled with merely a few encouraging sentences written back to the writers in their journals. Sometimes I ask them to see me for a brief conference. Rather surprisingly, I have never found a student reluctant to meet with me to discuss things orally, once the matter has been introduced on paper. One junior student, who was rather shy in class, opened up and told me of her desire to quit school because of domestic problems. She wanted to get her own apartment and work at the usual low-paying jobs in order to support herself. I finally persuaded her to make a bigger attempt to get along with her parents for one more year and finish high school before moving away from home. She is now in her senior year and even has plans for attending college next year. Had she not written about her unrest in her junior year, I would not have been able to encourage her in time to prevent another school dropout.

Some teachers say they are afraid to assign journals for fear of "learning too much" about their students' private lives. I disagree with them for the following reasons: (1) a teacher should be an advisor when necessary, (2) a teacher should be willing to face unpleasant situations if the student's welfare requires it, and (3) teachers who clearly understand their students' home and school situation are far better able to obtain good results in their particular discipline.

Another doubt teachers sometimes express regarding personal entries is lack of faith in their abilities to be competent advisors. Actually, one does not have to be an "Ann Landers" to respond to the problems students sometimes submit. If teachers doubt their ability to deal with a particular problem, they can always refer the student to a school or professional counselor. At any rate, students seldom expect their English teacher to be a miracle worker; a sympathetic ear is usually all they expect.

One final question often raised regarding journals is the feasibility of finding time to read and respond to them. I have worked out a solution for this difficulty. I assign one class only for a four to five week period of daily journal writing. When this class completes their scheduled time, the next class begins their four-week period. Since I have sophomores for a full year, I can use the same system during the second semester. Regarding comments, I normally keep them brief. A simple "nice entries" or a suggestion to "make lengthier entries" is often all that is needed or expected. It is only when a situation arises where a response is obviously wanted that I take more time to communicate with the student. One thing I can truly state—the time spent to increase rapport with students is, without exception, time well spent.

# GROWING THE BASIC PARAGRAPH

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St. Louis Archdiocese

Writing based on personal experience--thinking, feeling, talking--expresses the writer's self. What better way to reach junior high students, a heterogeneous, identity conscious group of adolescents, loyal to one another, whose common goal is to think alike? While expressing themselves in their own way, these young writers gradually learn to order, clarify, and convey their experiences effectively. James Britton (1975) shows that expressive writing is an all-purpose tool which gradually becomes specialized for doing different kinds of jobs. As the adolescent grows, so does the basic paragraph.

As an infant, writing finds and forms itself through prewriting experiences. As a child, writing clarifies and develops itself through the topic sentence, body, and conclusion. As an adolescent, writing differentiates and enhances its growth through expository essays having various methods of development and using mature transitional words. I have found in my classroom that starting with the expressive base of adolescent experience helps me teach the logic and order of the expository paragraph.

Junior high students, eager to communicate a part of themselves, readily respond to journal writing. This medium encourages them to record their personal thoughts without fear of embarrassment, and to express themselves freely while developing fluency and style. Soon these adolescents become eager to write frequently, and their initiative is contagious. Junior high students proudly share their thoughts with peers and teacher: begging, pleading, cajoling them to read an entry.

The adolescent is bombarded constantly by sense impressions. James Moffett (1968) and George Hillocks (1976) show how sensory experiences can help writers capture specific details on paper. Using an apple, celery stick, piece of bubble gum, or peppermint cane, my students record their sensory experiences to form a seven paragraph sensory extravaganza. For example, the introductory paragraph begins by pointing out the object being described. Subsequent paragraphs develop the senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. The concluding paragraph summarizes this sensory record. Ten minute observations within a classroom, during a lunch period, or on a school bus stimulate more sensory recording. As a result of these journal and prewriting activities, junior high writers feel secure in their ability to communicate with the written word.

Now, my students are ready to develop unified paragraphs. A paragraph is a unit consisting of a group of related sentences. Its three necessities include topic sentence, body, and conclusion. As Francis Christensen has shown (1966), the vast majority of paragraphs written by professionals begin with a topic sentence. Junior high writers should be encouraged to place a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph, although once they are familiar with the form they may choose at times to place a topic sentence at the end or in the middle of a paragraph. The topic sentence states the writer's main idea, the central thought, and specifically expresses an attitude toward the subject. The topic sentence gives the paragraph unity and direction by containing a control word, usually an adjective with denotative and connotative meaning. My students search the dictionary and thesaurus to become familiar with uncommon and under-used adjectives such as eerie, hostile, eloquent, cunning, monotonous, or harrowing. The following topic sentences, with control words underlined, have worked well with my junior high writers:

I like school for three important reasons.
Bugging a teacher is a specialized procedure.
X (rock group or soul singer) provides a fantastic sensory experience.
X (movie or play) is suspenseful entertainment.

Thus, the topic sentence is nearly always the first sentence of the self-contained one-paragraph essay, and its control word explicitly designates and signals the thesis of the paragraph.

The second necessity of a paragraph is its body, the developmental sentences that support, prove, explain, and clarify the topic sentence, specifically concentrating on its control word. This is the "meat" of the paragraph; in the self-contained one paragraph essay, the body usually consists of seven to ten sentences. To develop a topic sentence and its control word, the junior high writer is encouraged to use coordinate and subordinate sequences of sentences. Francis Christensen defines a paragraph as "a sequence of structurally related sentences":

> If the first sentence of a paragraph is the topic sentence, the second is quite likely to be a comment on it, a development of it, and therefore subordinate to it. The third sentence may be coordinate with the second sentence (as in this paragraph) or subordinate to it. The fourth sentence may be coordinate with either the second or third (or with both if they themselves are coordinate, as in this paragraph) or subordinate to the third. And so on. A sentence that is not coordinate with any sentences above it or subordinate to the next above it, breaks the sequence. The paragraph has begun to drift from its moorings, or the writer has unwittingly begun a new paragraph.
>
> (The Sentence and the Paragraph, 1966, p. 21)

These same relationships of coordination and subordination may be seen within the individual sentence. I find it helpful to work on sentence development and form along with paragraph development and form. Coordinate sentences, usually parallel in structure, show likenesses as they restate, illustrate, and enumerate. They try to give an equal emphasis to ideas being connected, achieving balance. Coordinate sentences may use coordinate conjunctions: and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet. Of course, when the coordinate conjunction is omitted, these two independent but closely related sentences may be separated by a semicolon. Subordinate sentences, not parallel in structure, show unlikenesses as they add depth and further explanation to coordinate sentences. They limit or put conditions on the main idea. Subordinate sentences use a variety of connecting words:

subordinate conjunctions - after, although, as, because, before, if, since, unless, until, when, where, while.

relative pronouns - who, whom, whose, which, that.

Examples of coordination and subordination are:

The students are silent. The teacher begins her lecture.

Coordination: The students are silent, and the teacher begins her lecture.
Subordination: The students are silent as the teacher begins her lecture.

A sleepy student forgets things. He needs a good night's sleep.

Coordination: A sleepy student forgets things, so he needs a good night's sleep.
Subordination: A sleepy student forgets things because he needs a good night's sleep.

Therefore, growing directly from the topic sentence, the body, with its coordinate and subordinate sentences which comment and develop sequentially, adds to the unity of the paragraph.

A conclusion is the third necessity of paragraph development. It is the end, the final thought which summarizes, repeats verbatim, or rephrases the writer's attitude as developed in the body and established in the control word of the topic sentence.

A ready supply of ideas is a basic asset to any writer, and junior high writers, with their adolescent experiences, readings, knowledge, and creativity, can develop their paragraphs using a variety of methods. The topic sentence—or "predication" as Josephine Miles (1979) calls it--should logically determine the writer's method of development: illustration, factual detail, comparison and contrast, analysis, and definition.

Examples can support an idea easily and effactively. The adolescent writer makes a statement and then clarifies it by pointing to a specific occurrence or fact that illustrates the idea. The junior high writer should be encouraged to use several examples based on personal experience to bring home the controlling idea. These illustrations should be clear, precise, and interesting. Some topics that my students have developed by illustration are a family member's kindness or stubborness, fashions in dress among adolescents, popularity of rock or country-western music among teenagers, and a person most admired or most influential in their lives.

Factual detail may be used to support a topic sentence with facts, statistics, and judgments. A fact is a report, a statement which can be verified through observation, computation, or reliable sources, e.g. Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter in the 1980 Presidential election. On the other hand, a judgment records a personal opinion of approval or disapproval which cannot be proven true or false, e.g. Abraham Lincoln was a compassionate President. Yet, judgments illustrated by facts can enhance and make more convincing this method of paragraph development. The psychological dangers of smoking marijuana, the popularity of professional football, decline of the dollar's purchasing power, and the appeal of television programs to a mass audience are topics my students have developed successfully through factual detail.

Similarities are pointed out in a comparison paragraph while differences are pointed out in a contrast paragraph. I prefer to teach the adolescent writer to become familiar with each one seperately. Beginners can point out likenesses between self and a friend or a family member and then go on to point out the differences. Next the junior high writer should be taught how to arrange supporting detail for a comparison and contrast paragraph. The block method presents information about the first subject in the first four or five sentences and information about the second subject in the remaining sentences. Another method alternates between subjects in successive sentences. A third approach presents both subjects in the same sentence. My students have written good comparison and contrast paragraphs on a three speed versus a ten speed bike, old versus new blue jeans, a conforming versus a non-conforming teenager, and one fast food restaurant versus another.

Analysis is the process of dividing a subject into its smaller, component parts, showing how the parts relate to each other and to the whole. The analysis paragraph may explain a process, tell how to make or do something, or analyze an historical event by dividing it into periods. My students have written step-by-step procedures for preparing a favorite food, riding a skateboard, taking notes, diagramming a sentence, and making the best sandwich.

Students are frequently asked to define terms. Learning to write clear definitions aids tremendously in test-taking; more important, good definition promotes clear thinking and writing. A writer can define by using examples, synonyms, history or etymology, or formal definition — placing the word in a general class and then using detail to distinguish it from others. My students have developed successful definition paragraphs on democracy, maturity, patriotism, and the intellectual.

Clear, readable, paragraphs must be coherent as well as unified and well-developed; the sentences must link together smoothly so the reader can easily follow the writer's progression of thought. Coherence in a paragraph depends basically upon an orderly arrangement of ideas, a logical sequence. In addition, coherence depends on the use of special "bridges"--transitions--providing continuity between sentences or within sentences. My students learn the common transitional words and phrases along with the relationships they express:

TRANSITIONS

| RELATIONSHIP | EXPRESSION |
|---|---|
| addition, continuation | and, also, in addition, too, of course, moreover, again, furthermore, first second |
| contrast | but, however, even so, yet, in the meantime, nevertheless, on the other hand, still |
| illustration, exemplification | for example, for instance, as an illustration, that is, in other words, in particular |
| similarity | similarly, likewise, in a like manner, correspondingly, in the same way |
| conclusion, result (cause, effect) | therefore, consequently, then, so, accordingly, hence, thus, eventually, as a result, due to |
| concession | though, although, it may be true that, even though, granted that |
| summation, conclusion | finally, in summary, in sum, in short, in conclusion, to sum up |
| emphasis | indeed, in fact, certainly, admittedly, truly, surely, I repeat |
| time passage | then, next, later, meanwhile, subsequently, previously, earlier, at that moment, now |

Although overuse of these expressions can make writing awkward and mechanical, transitions improve coherence when used moderately and with variety. I teach coherence to junior high writers by extracting paragraphs from newspapers, magazines, novels, or even recipes, deleting the transitional words, citing the relationship desired, and then having my students choose appropriate transitional expressions:

EXERCISE #1

Refugee accounts must be taken with a measure of skepticism. People naturally tend to embellish their narrative in order to amplify their own importance. ____________________ (addition), the person who may have risked his life to flee is not likely to be entirely objective about the country he has forsaken. ____________________ (addition), the majority of refugees we saw came from Saigon with a sprinkling of others mostly from coastal cities. ____________________(conclusion, result), our sampling of Vietnamese was limited. ____________________(contrast), the experience we heard gave a glimpse of life in Vietnam today.

Suggested answers: Moreover, In addition, Thus, Nevertheless.

EXERCISE #2

For each phrase in parentheses below, substitute a transitional word but do not use the same word twice.

(To begin with) crack two eggs into a deep bowl. (The next thing) add about one tablespoon of milk for each egg. (The next thing) add salt and pepper. (The next thing) beat the eggs and milk together. (The next thing) begin heating the frying pan. (The next thing) put about one teaspoon of butter in the frying pan to melt. (The next thing) add the beaten eggs to the frying pan and stir. (The next thing) continue to stir the eggs as they cook and remove them from the frying pan. (The next thing) your scrambled eggs are ready to eat.

Suggested answers: First, Second, Also, Next, At that moment, Then, Now, Of course, Finally.

Adolescents, as they express themselves in paragraph writing, become senders of messages, values, and ideas. By writing frequently (journal and pre-writing); by developing the topic sentence with its control word; by communicating using different methods of paragraph development; and by using transitional words to establish coherence, the junior high writer will be growing the basic paragraph, mastering the art of writing, and learning the truth of Francis Bacon's maxim, "Writing maketh an exact man."

# PEER EDITING--LESS RED INK, BETTER WRITING

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(formerly St. Louis U. High)

Hours of correcting. Days of correcting. Whole weekends of correcting. To avoid drowning in a maelstrom of papers, I have begun teaching students to edit prose. Editing teaches them how to hone their own work and how to reshape the writing of others. This craft forces them to write independently rather than depend on my red-penned comments. And since a paper hemorrhaging red ink usually ends up in the circular morgue rather than on the rewrite desk, I am using fewer red pens and more editing tools. Here's how I teach group editing to high school students.

The key to successful group editing lies in priming: the initial maneuvers must be done carefully. First, the members must trust each other before they can diplomatically yet effectively edit a piece of writing. I wait until I know students a bit, say several weeks into the semester, to assemble groups. In the meantime, I concentrate on the literature, beginning each class with a question to which students respond on paper. The in-class writing shows me whether students have read the assignment, limbers their writing, and sparks class discussion. I usually write with the class. Some days I bring in dittoed examples of "alive" prose (their work and excerpts from professionals), juxtaposing it with writing in need of an autopsy, to help students become aware of good prose and its life signs. This early strategy lets me identify student strengths and potential personality clashes before peer groups form.

After several weeks, depending on the chemistry of the class, I mix students of varying abilities (four to five members per group) and tell them that unless some serious problem arises, they will work together throughout the semester. (I have had trouble shuffling groups at semester because students say, "We trust each other and it would take so much time to start over." In some classes, then, I have allowed students to remain in one group all year.) Class size averages thirty; I usually divide students into six or seven groups, assigning each group a corner of the classroom or space in the hall. These groups need some semblance of quiet to function properly, and I keep down noise complaints from other quarters by closing the classroom door, allowing only responsible students to work in the hall.

Members have to feel that they belong before a group will cohere. I start training groups with sentence combining exercises because they pose little personal threat while building a sense of trust. Sentence combining can be keyed to literature, so last spring while reading The Reivers with a sophomore class I dissected one of Faulkner's paragraphs into a combining task. Each group chose the best sentences from individual papers, aligning them into one very fine group paragraph. Moving around the room, I heard:

Bob: We're supposed to be concise. I think this sentence is good because it's not wordy.
Mike: But this one's got better rhythm. Listen.
John: You guys, we got fifteen minutes left. We gotta keep moving.

At the hour's end, I collected ditto masters and made copies of the best paragraph. The following day, authors received not only public recognition but also extra credit points to reinforce my seriousness about editing groups. I have also used the "Richard Cory" exercise from Koch and Brazil's Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process to encourage trust and commitment among group members.

Once group members begin trusting each other, I ask them to write a first-person narrative, something they would be willing to read to an audience. I encourage by saying that this paper is based on their own memories, their closest and most accessible resource. They are to render an event from either the near or distant past, following an assignment sheet like this one given to juniors in an honors English class:

## LIGHT IN AUGUST: MEMORIES

One idea Faulkner returns to again and again is the idea of the past: many of his characters are strongly affected by memories. Sarty Snopes, for example, has vivid memories of his father's physical and emotional rigidity years after he has run away. Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower are also aware of the past: they spend most of their adult lives trying to come to terms with what has happened to them.

I'd like you to tell some memory you have—something joyful, something sad, something you didn't understand then but have gradually comprehended. To begin the first draft, concentrate on seeing the event.

Include all the details you think your audience needs to understand what happened. These first drafts will be read to the members of your group and I will also have a short conference with you to go over the paper.

Your first draft is due this Thursday. Length is up to you, but to make your audience see what you want them to, I think you need at least two handwritten pages.

Thought starters: a specific event involving you and one of your parents, a realization about something that happened in school, someone you knew in childhood, something crazy that happened on a Saturday afternoon.

> Consider these questions: What is the main feeling I had about that event? Which details best render that feeling? Which details clutter and thereby distract the audience? Which verbs reinforce that feeling?

I tell students their grades will reflect how closely they make details point to specific feelings. Later, this assignment sheet and list of questions will guide their response as editors.

After students have written first drafts, they read their papers aloud in peer groups. I've discovered that reading aloud almost makes the writing seem like someone else's work. Sentence rhythms become prominent, and sentence fragments jump out. Moreover, reading aloud gives students a better sense of audience; they write better if they know they will read to peers. They find themselves reading in public instead of seeing their papers disappear into Teacher's bottomless briefcase. So reading papers aloud is a requirement for all group members.

While one writer is reading, others listen and take notes on the words or phrases that stick in their minds. Editors have the instruction sheet and list of questions as reminders that the writer cannot merely tell that members of her family were elated; she has to show hugs or handstands. (Ideally, students would have dittoes or Xeroxes of the writer's work, but expense and logistics have so far prevented this. I am thinking about using carbon copies.) As each writer finishes, editors respond using their notes and the instruction sheet. They can begin by saying what they think the main point is or what voice is coming through, remembering they are trying to respond to the writing, not to the writer's apologies or to the subject. The writers themselves try to stay quiet while their papers are being reviewed. Pat's editors, for example, focussed on images of an aquarium and their connection to his father. Paul's group was impressed with his verbal dexterity: he maneuvered verbs with the same ability (and sheer guts) he uses to maneuver a bike through downtown St. Louis.

To reinforce procedures, I request a written report on the editing session from each writer. A sample:

> The general consensus on my rough draft was that I had a good story with much potential. The group said I did a good job of showing what happened, and that while I had some weak verbs, I also had some strong adjectives that described well. They weren't quite sure what I was leading up to in the beginning, but that the end seemed to wrap it all together. They liked the story, despite its excessive irony.

Another writer reports:

> We ran out of time on my paper and the room was getting pretty loud. My group liked my description of a float trip on the Little St. Francis but they said I have to make my sentences less wordy. Gene and Rob marked some sentences.

This writer brings up problems bound to surface. At the beginning of each editing session I urge people to concentrate: spend time now and save yourself hours at home. In any group there's bound to be some chatter, but when students gradually realize that talk about specific lines helps untangle wadded prose, they chatter less, work more. Within the space of fifty minutes each writer has to get comments on a paper, including some in the margin. That, coupled with awareness of a weekly participation grade, encourages groups to get their editing done. I also use this participation grade to dock editors who come unprepared, that is, without a draft of the assignment.

When time allows, I write on the assignment and ask to join a group. Such gives me the chance not only to improve my own writing but also to comment on a piece: "I heard an angry voice coming through. Your details--a bitten lip, loud silence, quivering handwriting--made me hear it. My memory of the middle section isn't clear, though." In naming phrases that stand out in her mind, the editor says, "This is what got through to me." If the writer wants to emphasize different words, different ideas, he'll have to consider two possibilities: either the editor didn't listen or the writer isn't making his message clear.

In the beginning, peer commentary is limited to positive remarks because both young writers and older ones put their egos on the line when they write. Initially editors are urged to play up the strong parts of the writing. Later, as group members begin trusting, they find themselves venturing suggestions about garbled phrases and having them accepted. Once students have felt the warmth of peer approval, they seem to have little trouble making positive comments about writing; the difficult thing for them, indeed for any editor, is to offer praise while still pointing out problems. I've suggested that editors simply put question marks and wavy lines next to unclear passages. They do this after oral readings are finished and papers are passed around the group for written comments. Editors can also say they felt confused when such-and-such passage was read. In Chapter 6 of Writing Without Teachers, Peter Elbow spells out these techniques for group response.

Malcolm and Hulda Knowles' "Eighteen Roles in a Group," from Introduction to Group Dynamics (New York: Association Press, 1972, pp. 52-56), has also helped me enormously in training students to be constructive rather than destructive editors. Early in the training period, I spend a class hour going over these roles, pointing out what can be done about problems like monopolized conversation. (Time-keeper reminds group of editing deadline. Also, group gently asks the monopolizer to desist.) After students are familiar with the roles, a game helps teach group cohesion. Each person is secretly assigned a role, and during group work, each must behave according to the designated role. Students then write their guesses about roleplayers. The last time I did this virtually everyone knew shy, retiring George had been a blocker: his filibustering against work went on for nearly thirty minutes!

Sometimes I notice one or two students doing most of the work in a group or hear complaints that so-and-so does nothing but sit. I draw the quiet one aside to discuss the problem. Sometimes it's fear of being thought stupid; other times it's sheer laziness. In both cases I listen and then remind the writer that he or she has a duty to the group and it's not fair to let one or two people shoulder the burden. I might also remind an insecure student about good performance on a recent quiz.

First experiences with editing groups taught me the importance of priming students, and an encounter with Jeanne, a very bright sixteen year-old, drove the point home. Editing groups, only about two weeks old, were working on first drafts of a first-person narrative. I was sitting with a nearby group when suddenly, a red-faced Jeanne bolted from the room. Another group member had told her, "Shut up. You're acting like you got all the answers." A third member stopped by after class: "She writes all the time anyway, so she was sort of lording it over us." Sought out, Jeanne said she really wanted to write and didn't realize how she was affecting her editors. The day before the next editing session, I drew attention to "Eighteen Roles in a Group," emphasizing a number of positive roles I had seen operating and mentioning one or two negative ones. The written reports were revealing:

> I think we should keep doing this. It's hard to say the right thing at the right time, but my group helped me fix my story.
>
> People are being real careful about hurting feelings, so it's been kind of hard to know what corrections to make. Maybe after a while we'll loosen up.

And that's about what happened. Editing groups met once every ten days. The main problems, I discovered, were getting the papers read and eliciting helpful comments. Timekeepers helped groups learn to pace themselves to four or five papers per hour, and I modelled oral responses to improve commentary: "You seem to be saying that Mabel and the doctor cannot love because they have never been loved themselves. That's what I get from the first page of your essay." Jeanne gradually found that she could use or discard her editors' remarks as she saw fit. She and students like her blossomed through peer approval; by the same token, Jeanne learned some diplomacy.

Among some group reports written months later, I found this from Jeanne:

> At first I really hated groups and didn't think they would work. Part of the problem was Lynne--I couldn't stand her. Somehow though, we began to realize that we were trying to learn how to write. That made working together easier.

For Teacher, the practical advantage of peer editing is "cleaner" papers. Run-ons that have seemed permanent fixtures suddenly disappear. Paragraphs begin flowing more logically. These changes come about because group members begin to share what they have learned about writing. I know students are beginning to trust one another when, during in-class writing, they spontaneously consult group members in an effort to "get it straight."

I've also found that in acting as editors, students gradually become more confident of their own writing. More specifically, young writers move beyond merely trying to satisfy Teacher and start trying to communicate with an audience, an audience of peers who in many cases matter more than Teacher.

# MAKE A MESS; POLISH A PAPER

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All was going well. There were no groans when I asked that journals be opened. There was eager anticipation as we began each prewriting experience, even though the students knew that intensive writing and rewriting would follow. None of the potential problems of having peer groups had presented themselves. Students knew and practiced the complete writing process.

Yet I was disturbed--a few symptoms demanded diagnosis and prescription. The peer group sharings went much too fast. (I knew eighth graders would not spend 3 hours or more reacting to five papers as we had done in Gateway, but 20 minutes?) Writers were not getting enough constructive feedback and were making meager revisions from the original draft to final copies.

The students did conscientiously answer each question on the checklist I gave them. They told the writer specific words or sections that appealed to them. They answered Elbow's (1973) questions, "What color is this writing?" or "What kind of music is in this writing?" They talked about the topic, usually exchanging past experiences. But writers seldom got any hints that their writing could be changed, much less any specific suggestions as to what needed improvement. My checklist asked, "Were you confused at any point?" "What did you want to know more about?" "Were there any general words that could be made more specific?" Answers were usually in the negative, yet the writing would be a model example of generalities. The writer would return to the task of revision with either a sense of complacency or helplessness.

The students knew that revision is relooking at the writing objectively to see if the details have succeeded in creating the impression, feeling, or idea for the reader. They knew their teacher liked messy drafts. (Some had even resorted to hurried penmanship to create the desired "messiness.") They knew that a final copy is not just a duplicate of their original, only written in ink. (In fact, rather than require final copies in ink, I ask my students to use pencil so that errors in mechanics can be corrected without having to rewrite the entire paper.) They knew that details and specific, descriptive words are needed and should fit the writer's purpose, audience, and voice. They knew that every piece of writing is a draft. They knew the heart of the writing process is revising. They knew revising is not proofreading. They knew--but they didn't understand.

They were too easily satisfied--both as writers and as listeners/readers. They were not aware of the options facing a writer. While most felt they knew what they had wanted to say and that they had said it, a few began asking questions: "How can I make this better?" "I know this can be better, but I don't know how to do it."

Obviously there was a need to teach revision, not just talk about its importance and its main elements.

Murray (1968) suggests that the writer as editor examines first the whole piece of writing, searching for gaps needing transitions and problems of order. The writer then focuses on the paragraph as a unit, next each sentence's contribution, and finally the individual phrases and words, watching for clichés, wordiness, and lack of specificity. Although this procedure is undoubtedly helpful to many, it is not enough for the eighth grader. The inexperienced writer really struggles to become the unknowing reader of material for which she is the all-knowing writer. The junior high student needs more specific suggestions of how to revise. Later, Murray (1968) states,

> How can you teach a class to do this (revise)? You can't. You can show a class that writers have always taken the time to reconsider what they have written, to change and develop it, but cannot teach a class to go through this process. You can, however, teach individuals to do this. When a student has something he wants to say and he has tried to say it and he hasn't quite succeeded, then you can give him the opportunity to do the job right. In class and in conference a student should be urged to ask himself four crucial questions:
>
> What have I said?
> Does what I have said make sense?
> What additional information do I need to know?
> Does my form fit my new content?

I cannot question that individual conferences are the ideal way to proceed and are possible in the classroom that understands and practices the writing process. Those individual conferences, however, can be more meaningful and certainly more efficiently carried out if the entire class has had some experience in practicing some revision strategies.

I began by demonstrating the kind of messiness that was desirable. Showing revised drafts by professionals (on the overhead) proved that success is not all inspiration. Memorable phrases such as "a day that will live in infamy," began as mundane cliches: "A date which will live in world history" (Murray, 1968). After looking at Roosevelt's original draft of his December 8, 1941 speech to Congress, and my many drafts of a paper telling about my babysitter, the students began to see what messiness was. They began to see the options that are available to any writer and the difference made by each choice.

Finally, we examined a classmate's original draft--one with no revisions at all. I Xeroxed and ran off copies for each student and made a transparency from the paper. Selecting the "right" paper for this session is crucial. If it is too poorly written, the writer will feel ripped to shreds by all the criticism, however constructive. The paper must evidence a balance of good elements of writing and a need for specific revision in the areas to be taught.

> I was sitting alone in a dark, musty closet. All that was in the closet was a window and a telephone. The telephone rang, so I picked the reciever. Whoever it was that was on the other end wasn't there. there was only heavy breathing. I went in the corner of the closet and sat down. After a while I looked out the window and there stood a horrifying creature. It was all black and hairy with one eyeball hanging out. He kept pounding his fists on the window, trying to get in. After a while the monster got tired of pounding and left. I sat staring for the longest time still shocked about what just happened. I heard someone coming, so I pounded on the door, hoping that someone would let me out. Something did let me out, but it wasn't a person, it was the creature who kept pounding on the window!

First we noted, as was our practice, what we liked about the writing. The "hanging eyeball" was their favorite detail. Then I asked, "What questions could you ask if this paper had just been read in your peer group?" "What confuses you or what do you want to know more about?" Questions came fast and furiously: "How could the person on the other end of the phone not be there?" "How big was the monster?" "Why did she look out the window?" "Why was the closet dark if there was a window?" "Why was there a telephone in a closet?"

None of these issues had been clarified in this student's "revised" copy. (It was identical to the draft except written in ink!) Her peer group had let her down.

The confusing sentence about the caller on the phone was tackled first since we felt we did know what the writer intended. This proved to be a good exercise in saying exactly what is meant and saying it concisely. Students suggested these revisions:

> "Whoever had been on the other end of the line wasn't there."
>
> "Whoever was on the other end didn't respond."
>
> "Whoever it was that was on the other end probably couldn't speak; there was only heavy breathing."
>
> "I could not hear anybody talking, but I could hear breathing as if somebody were dying."
>
> "There was only heavy breathing." (Eliminate first part of the original sentence.)

Acknowledging that only the original writer could answer the rest of the questions raised, we went on to deal with what was there. We focused first on adding details, knowing we would then come back and change general words to more specific ones, and finally would focus on phrasing and sentence combining.

To dispense with the overriding concern of the omitted "up" in sentence three, we put that in first. I asked students where we could add details--single words or phrases--that would help clarify the text or would better enable the reader to sense what was happening. They offered many, which I projected on the screen, and they would select their favorite to insert on their copies. Most of the additions were single words, especially modifiers:

rang loudly/shrilly
I slowly/cautiously picked up the phone

sitting uncomfortably/patiently
he kept violently pounding his fists. . . .desperately trying

Our lively discussion provided the opportunity to bring home several points:

-that revisions can be suggested by others, but only the author can select the most appropriate words to achieve a singular mood and tone (e.g. choosing between uncomfortably and patiently to modify sitting).

-that each word has a different connotation (e.g., slowly or cautiously to modify picked up).

-that it is impossible to revise in the step by step fashion I was insisting upon. This artificial structure is necessary to give a class discussion some kind of order and to teach the types of revision, but when one is revising one's own writing, all strategies of revision are done simultaneously: adding details, changing words, combining sentences.

I reminded them of the questions they had raised earlier which would be answered by adding more explanatory details: why did she look out the window? how big was the monster? We did not take class time to add this kind of detail because only the original writer could "know" the answers.

We then looked for bland verbs that could be changed to add power and "umph" to the story:

sitting: slumped, crouched
sat: slid, slouched
went: crept
looked: glanced, stared, peered

We accepted all suggestions, realizing that we were often contradicting a mood established earlier, but enjoying the wide range of options.

Finally we moved to sentence combining, which we had practiced to some extent as a class. Again, emphasis was on options and how each change in structure changed the focus of the reader:

I was sitting alone in a dark musty closet with a telephone and a window.

Sitting alone in a dark, musty closet, I saw a window and a telephone.

I was sitting in a dark musty closet that had a window and a telephone.

I was sitting in a dark musty closet with only a window and a telephone.

To be sure everyone had the chance to practice what had been learned, I asked the students to pick out one section of two or three sentences to revise on their own, adding details and changing words and sentence structure to create a consistent effect. This assignment allowed them to use ideas we had discussed rather than start from scratch on another piece of writing. These revisions, mimeographed and discussed the next day, demonstrated forcefully the value of real revision, and with more suggestions being made, reinforced the concept that every piece of writing is a draft:

Original

After a while I looked out the window and there stood a horrifying creature. It was all black and hairy with one eyeball hanging out. He kept pounding his fists on the window, trying to get in. After a while the monster got tired of pounding and left.

Revision

I glanced out the clouded window and through the misty darkness I could make out a horrifying creature with thick black fur covering its entire 9 foot body and one of its yellowed eyeball hanging out of its socket, swimming freely in the cold night air. After what seemed forever, the monster grew tired of pounding and disappeared.

Original

I went in the corner of the closet and sat down. After a whie I looked out the window and there stood a horrifying creature. It was all black and hairy with one eyeball hanging out.

Revision

I found my way to the corner of the closet and sat still, curled up and scared. I turned my head and through the window my eyes met the eyes of a man with his clothes ragged and dirty. One of his eyeballs hung from his face. Blood clung to it as it dangled in the cold wind, tapping his rough cheek lightly.

Original

The telephone rang, so I picked the receiver. Whoever it was that was on the other end wasn't there. There was only heavy breathing. I went in the corner of the closet and sat down.

Revision

The telephone screamed, so I grabbed the cold clammy receiver. The line was dead except for the deep, heavy, death-like breathing that let me know someone was there. Trembling, I put the black receiver back on its stand which had arms of security that surrounded it. I inched slowly to the corner of the crumbling closet, and slid down the wall, feeling abandoned.

Original

Whoever it was that was on the other end wasn't there. There was only heavy breathing. I went in the corner of the closet and sat down. After a while I looked out the window and there stood a horrifying creature. It was all black and hairy with one eyeball hanging out.

Revision

Whoever it was on the other end was just breathing heavily, unwilling to speak. I sank into the corner of the dusty closet and fell to the floor. I glanced out the small uneven window and there lurked a horrifying black, hairy creature with one eyeball hanging out of the oversized socket.

Original

> I heard someone coming, so I pounded on the door, hoping that someone would let me out. Something did let me out, but it wasn't a person, it was the creature who kept pounding on the window!

Revision

> I heard some deep heavy footsteps coming, so I pounded on the door hoping it would be my dad coming home to let me out of the terrifying closet. The door opened slowly. To my surprise it wasn't my dad; it was the tall horrifying creature who kept pounding on the closet window.

The lesson so far had succeeded in presenting specific strategies to accomplish the general objectives of revision and had many beneficial side effects. But John and Susie still had to struggle with their individual writings before they would "own" the revision process. Each student selected a short section from a prior paper and copied it on a ditto master so that each member of the group had a copy of each peer selection. Each student then revised all four or five paragraphs. The group discussed the various revisions and wrote a final revision cooperatively.

Following are two examples of a student's original paragraph and the peer group's revision:

Original:

> My mom, sister, and I all started talking and saying what we thought had happened and asked where my brother was, how the lightning got that socket, and what were we supposed to do because we were all a little shaky. Time went by fast and we stopped talking about the incident.

Revision:

> My mom, sister, and I slowly began chattering at once saying what we imagined had occurred. We asked how my brother was, how the lightning somehow or other hit that particular socket, and what we should do since we were all a little too shaky to concentrate on the incident. As time went by we slowly stopped talking and worrying about the incident that had shocked us all.

Original:

> Chas, Tim, and I swung over on the ropes. Chas killed three trolls with his sword, I killed two, and Tim missed. During the melee round, they missed.

Revision:

> Gallantly, Chas, Tim and I swung over on the rough ropes which were generously aged by the harsh sea water. Chas brutally slayed several trolls with his terrible swift sword. I managed to send two to their death and Tim, a rather poor swordsman anyway, shamefully missed. The beasts tried a forceful counter attack but all in vain.

All of this teaching had interrupted a major writing assignment at the point of completing the first draft. The students now returned to that draft, met with their peer groups, and revised their writing with new confidence.

Their drafts did become messier, revisions became more substantial, peer groups became more effective, and the students took a major step toward becoming better writers. Individual conferences with students were more efficient since we had a common base from which to operate, and suggestions to add details were more than a vague directive. The revision lessons, even though they stretched to three periods or more, were well worth the time invested.

Note: An earlier version of this paper was delivered at "Conversations on Writing," a conference sponsored by the Greater St. Louis English Teachers' Association, Oct. 25, 1980.

# THE GRAMMAR OF GOOD WRITING

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A large suburban school district in St. Louis county recently ran a survey. The secondary English staff indicated that grammar should be taught in relationship to writing. Of course, a few held out for separate units of grammar. But the majority vote confirmed one fact: today teachers are aware of the shift underway in instruction—a shift that places grammar within the writing process.

The point must be made, I think, that this is not a replacement of grammar. Rather, it is a new placement of grammar in the educational scheme: grammar placed at the service of editorial polishing in revision; grammar taught through sentence-combining practices; grammar clarified through the new science of error analysis, the linguistic explanation of rules a student has generalized in mismanipulating the language. Indeed, the eighties point to new and exciting directions for the study of grammar in American classrooms.

Limiting my discussion to the traditional parts of speech, I want to suggest still other helpful and perhaps even whimsical ways for teachers to use grammar creatively in conjunction with writing.

A lesson on nouns, for instance, might be turned into a lesson on concrete wording. What respectable writer would trade in *persons*, *places*, or *things*? Lewis Carroll certainly does not. He writes about shoes and ships and sealing wax and cabbages and kings, emphatically all-in-a-rush without commas. A corresponding noun lesson in usage might deal in decapitation, no pun on *Alice* intended. Ever since Ben Franklin's futile, impassioned plea to Congress for national adoption of the capital letter, Yankee American English has been marching to the tune of a different drummer. Stylistically today the in-beat is down-beat. The small letter is preferred. Students enjoy learning that the exhortations to capitals in many high school textbooks are simply out-of-date. The rule to write a.m. and p.m. as capitals, for example, is actually a printer's rule--to set these time designations in small capitals as type.

Once a noun is established in a paragraph, pronouns are its Platonic shadows trailing behind. They are vague, abstract, and insipid as soup, although equally functional. Sometimes they muddle the meaning of clear writing, however, by becoming ghostly ambiguities: when they lose their antecedents, they haunt essays. In *Alice* the Duck pecks out one such pronoun immediately:

> ". . .and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable—"
> "Found *what*?" said the Duck.

> "Found it," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you know what 'it' means."
>
> "I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?"

Pronoun agreement is a natural topic for debate, especially if students are working upon narrowing such a controversial subject as Women's Liberation. Sexism soon rears its ugly head. And someplace between *personholes* and *Ms*., of course, is the problem of gender. It whips up in the names of hurricanes. It turns into a riotous match game of antecedents, unclecedents, and unicedents. In fact, it soon involves *everyone*.

Students can discover that great linguistic insight--LANGUAGE RULES CHANGE—through pronouns. They see the disagreement over pronoun agreement as usage responds to a social issue. At times in class discussions, students even reach metaphysical heights on the nature of words as matrices for creating realities. Or they can ponder deeply such profundities as whether Edith Bunker singing "Didn't need a welfare state/Everybody pulled *his* weight" is a tone error. And when the unit's final compositions come in, there in the pile may lie some brilliant linguistic studies on "Sex Roles in *Mother Goose*" or "The Grammarical-Genderical Blunders of Dr. Seuss."

As all good writers know, the singularly most moving part of speech is the verb. Especially if it dances in kinetic art. Start a lesson on verbs by watching Salvador Dali create moving figures in "Twist in the Studio of Velazquez." The sketch, an experiment in optical illusion, shows double images of dancers changing positions, their forms animated by the blink of the viewer's eyes. "Turn your eyeballs into strobe lights," the teacher enjoins. "Blink as fast as you can. Faster, faster, faster." The kids, worthy artisans of the word, rename the work "Homage to Active Verbs--Blink 'n' Boogie."

Sports writers score with verbs. Headlines for the sports page--"Oakville Tigers Trounce Lindbergh," "Colts Clobber Giants," "Cardinals Fly Right by Jets"—reveal how professional journalists avoid the old broken-record error of redundancy by using synonyms for *win*. In addition, headlines show the strength of active voice, another verb lesson in good writing. A can of Jolly Green Giant beans also works well to make a poster for teaching students active and passive verb structures. The recipe is easy: snip the tags—"net wt. 12 oz.," "fancy whole," and "kitsch" from *kitchen*—on the label. Paste them to giant, wordy, string-bean verbs in passive sentences pulled from students' writing. Label active constructions "solid" or "vacuum packed." Of course, "niblet" is also fine.

Write with kaleidoscope eyes—it's a Beatles' lesson on adjectives. Their technicolor song lyrics explode in surreal images of "newspaper taxies" and "rocking-horse people" and "looking-glass ties," of "tangerine trees" and "marmalade skies." *Blue* skies and *green* trees would be adjectival verbiage, although William Wordsworth's celebrated "golden daffodils" may have some connotative redemption. Occasionally the Beatles even dash off an oxymoron, the ultimate in adjective sophistication or points in a game of Scrabble. The wise foolishness of the lyric "It's been a hard day's night" comes from the same pen as the virgin-mother paradox "Lady Madonna lying on the bed."

Adverbs are much like dimmer switches for lighting. They can be used by the writer for subtle and dramatic effects, illuminating or shading down the intensity of other words. Graphically adverbs can be depicted as degrees on a thermostat: toooo, extremely, very, normally, rather, hardly, not. For an extra edge in writing, students can put adverbs forcefully to use as formulaic elements introducing quotes: "paradoxically observes" or "ironically comments,""strikingly states" or "powerfully concludes." Students can also use adverbs to split infinitives, of course, as Richard Armour jocundly does in his poem "Splitting Headache":

> To carelessly and wrongly split
> Infinitives I must admit
> I've tried to very rarely do.
> To ever split was bad, I knew.
> But now I want to in my way
> And simply and directly say
> That once you try to really plan
> To always split them when you can--
> To not avoid but work for one--
> It gets to somehow seem like fun.
>
> It All Started with Freshman English (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 21.

A cartoon in the St. Louis evening paper showed Ziggy, dictionary in hand, scratching his head. "The dictionary says a verb is a noun" the caption read. Prepositional phrases present this type of puzzlement. They introduce students to new and important rules of the grammar game: (1) words played as other parts of speech and (2) a suit of words considered as a whole. Prepositional phrases are patterned: preposition plus a noun, preposition plus a noun, preposition plus a noun--or occasionally a pronoun. Students can also play phrases as adjectives or adverbs when writing sentence-combining exercises, a winning move in the game of syntactic maturity. Later when modification expands into more complex additions such as appositions, clauses, and absolutes, it becomes the distinguishing feature that separates the writing of the amateur from the professional.

The Grammar Rock series by Xerox Corporation is a delightful approach to the parts of speech. Short animations set to music for primary children, these films also appeal to the child in a teen. In one movie boxcars divide and join in a railroad switchyard as the soundtrack twangs "Conjunction junction, what's your function?/Hooking up words and phrases and clauses. . ." But conjunctions, those good old glue words, are important for more than compounding. They also help to establish tone. Secondary students are well acquainted with the *and* *or nor* *but* *for* conjunctions of primary grades. In high school they should graduate to *however* *moreover* *nevertheless* *furthermore* *therefore* sophistication, the transitional markers of formal writing. And about those openers. "Don't start a sentence with a conjunction," the injunction students learned never to break as children, becomes childish when opening primary conjunctions become a stylistic device for establishing a pop tone.

"Wham," "Bamm," "Boom"--interjections explode in the comicstrips. "Snap," "Crackle," "Pop"--they are the noise prize in the cereal box. Onomatopoetic in nature, they add an aural dimension to the print page. James Stephens uses quasi-interjections effectively in his poem "The Main Deep" where they swell into a sea symphony of breaking wave: "Slow-sliding,/Cold-flushing,/On-on-on/Chill-rushing,/Hush-hushing,/Hush-hushing . . . ." And e e cummings makes them hover in corners and whisper from crooks: "hist whist/ little ghostthings/ tiptoe/ twinkle-toe/ little twitchy/witches and tingling/goblins." But that new journalist Tom Wolfe (1973, p. 14), writing an *Esquire* feature on custom cars, pens the classic example of soundtrack words--"There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored (Thphhhhhh!) Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (Rahghhh.) Around the Bend (Brummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm). . . ." Interjections make informal writing lively fun.

Don't forget the joker. There are wild words in the parts of speech deck: nouns played as adjectives, adjectives played as pronouns, pronouns played as adjectives, adjectives played as pronouns, pronouns played as conjunctions. The famous Abbot and Costello comedy routine *Who's on First?* derives its humor from the chameleon quality of language. In Carroll's chapter "The Messenger's Arrival," the fun of the scrambled pun stems from the same mercurial nature of words as the King takes a pronoun literally for a noun:

> "Who did you pass on the road?" the King went on. . . .
>
> "Nobody," said the Messenger.
>
> "Quite right," said the King: "this young lady saw him, too. So of course, Nobody walks slower than you."
>
> "I do my best," the Messenger said in a sullen tone. "I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do!"
>
> "He can't do that," said the King, "or else he'd have been here first."

Students need to understand the resourcefulness of language if they are to use words creatively to their maximum potential.

Fostering sensitivity to diction, demanding logic and precision in wording, suggesting stylistic techniques for emphatic compositions, the study of traditional grammar has much to offer the student writer. Grammar, however, should not be taught in isolation. It need not be taught with dead

Latinate jargon. It need not be taught through boring, bookish exercises. If taught less traditionally, it can produce good writing.

# Writing Is for Reading

Jacque Wuertenberg
Lindenwood Colleges

Young people need opportunities to see themselves actively involved with language. Through the process of classroom writing, editing and publishing, youngsters see themselves as both readers and writers. Here are several strategies to help get "The Publishing Process" started in your classroom.

Young people have within them their own personal language. It's easy to write about what you know about, so encourage young people to make a list of all the things they know they know. Help children list items they like and choose to do. Suggest categories: sports, hobbies, cooking, pets. Children know what they know; however, it is often difficult to discover a child's interest, whether it be dinosaur specialist or horse lover. When a child is asked, "What do you like to do?" or "What are you interested in?" the response is often, "Nothing," or "I don't know."

As teachers, by modeling our own interest areas, we encourage young people to talk about what they know and have experienced. On the first day of first grade, one teacher shared her photograph albums with her class. The children asked, "When is the real teacher coming? Teachers don't ride motorcyles. Are you the substitute?" As she explained to the youngsters that she was their teacher and did ride a motorcycle, they began to ask her questions, "What kind of motorcycle do you have? Where do you go?" She began to talk about what she knew about; they followed with information about their own interests.

An Oregon Trail buff from St. Louis, Missouri, whose family has traveled the whole length of the trail, rut by rut, spent kindergarten through third grade without his class knowing that he had climbed Chimney Rock, skipped stones in the Snake River and camped out in some of the same places as America's western pioneers. It isn't that no one was interested. We, as teachers, care. But Jason didn't know that anybody at school would be interested.

A strategy for encouraging youngsters to share who they are comes from Donna Nolte's forth graders in Wilton, Iowa. They wrote an adaptation of The Guiness Book of World Records:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jenifer Bierman: | "I have 39 horse models."<br>"I have a brother who fell asleep in the dentist chair." |
| Andy Brown: | "I've eaten over 25 bags of peas alone."<br>"My dad has a 1917 Dodge." |

| | |
|---|---|
| Dave Fowler: | "I'm the only one in the class with a false tooth." |
| Others: | "I slept in a dresser drawer."<br>"I have a grandmother who is 105."<br>"I've crossed the Mississippi at its source."<br>"I sleep in a bed that's 200 years old."<br>"My uncle helped put the flag on Iwo Jima." |

In fourth grade, as one of his authentic feats, Jason shared that he had twice traveled the Oregon Trail. Here is an excerpt from the book he then wrote:

### The Oregon Trail
by Jason Schoch

The Oregon Trail was 2,000 miles and it took 5½ month to make a trip across the trail. 300,000 people traveled the trail from 1820 to 1860. They began in Independence, Missouri and traveled either to Portland, Oregon, or one of the big gold mining towns in California. . .

In the back of Jason's book, his biographical sketch reads:

### About the Author

Jason is a 4th grader at Griffith School. He has traveled the Oregon Trail with his family twice; when he was four and again at eight years of age. His hobbies are collecting sports cards--all sports. His favorite sports are soccer, baseball and hockey. He's not especially interested in history--but loved traveling The Oregon Trail.

Help youngsters get started writing by identifying what they know. An economics professor at Washington University tells his students that you need to know ten times more than you'll put down in print.

Once you know what you know, it's still hard to begin writing. Assist youngsters in the writing process with a second strategy. Choose an easy-to-identify pattern, read the book aloud, and share that idea as a springboard for writing. For example, read aloud Margaret Wise Brown's The Important Book. Each page begins "The important thing about" and is followed by a topic such as "The important thing about an apple. . . ." Continue the sentence by adding a main idea and you have the beginning of a paragraph.

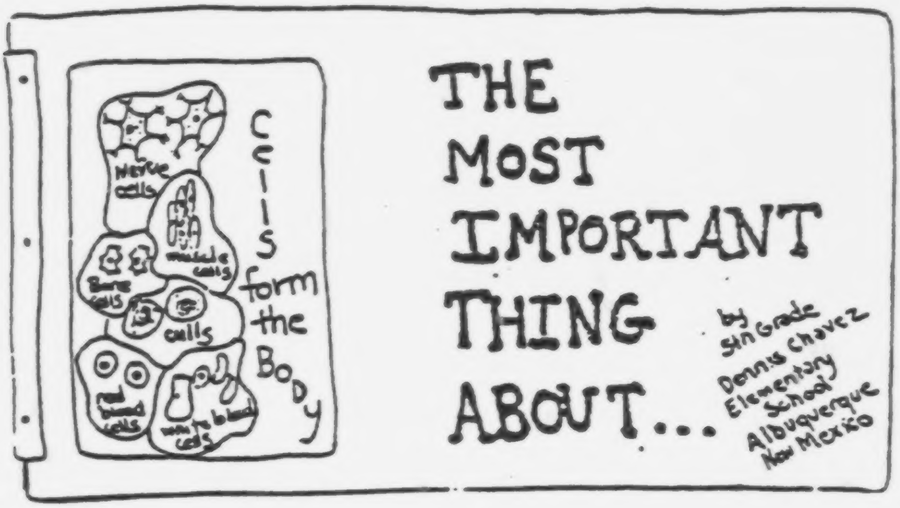
This easy-to-identify catalyst helps get the writing started. A seventh grade gymnast from Windsor, Ontario, wrote:

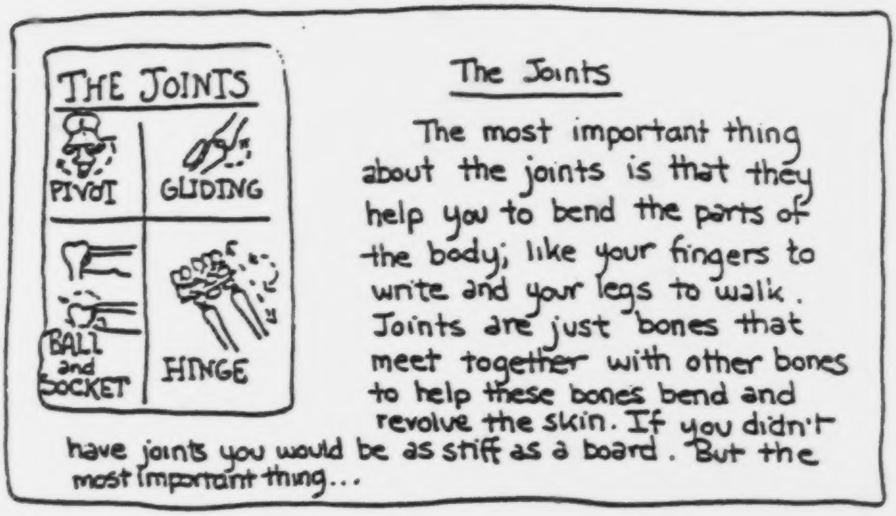
> The important thing about gymnastics is perfect concentration. You must have confidence, courage and good flexibility. You must be healthy and have strong bones and good muscles. You must not get discouraged. If you fall, just pick yourself up and start all over again. But, the important thing about gymnastics is perfect concentration.

You can next encourage each youngster to choose a favorite topic, use art as a catalyst--through sketching, making a collage, using paint or making a sculpture--and prepare a page for a class book. In a class book where everyone including the teacher contributes a page, youngsters see writing as a sharing process. Once the individual pages are assembled, add an attractive cover, include a table of contents, bind, and you have the beginning of a classroom library of limited editions. The student-authored books reflect the knowledge, interests, and activities of the class.

A shared classroom experience can become an additional writing activity. After a field trip, a science experiment, or cooking together, young people confirm what they have done by publishing the details. This book becomes part of the classroom library, an experience to be remembered again as the book is read.

After studying the human body, Norma Foster's fifth graders in Albuquerque, NM, wrote The Most Important Thing About. . . The Human Body. Their class book includes information on the cells, the skeleton, the brain, the heart, the stomach, the small intestines, the eyes, the lungs, the muscles and the joints. Here are some examples:


Cells form the Body
Nerve cells
muscle cells
Bone cells
cells
red blood cells
white blood cells
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT...
by 5th Grade
Dennis Chavez Elementary School
Albuquerque New Mexico


THE JOINTS
PIVOT
GLIDING
BALL and SOCKET
HINGE

The Joints

The most important thing about the joints is that they help you to bend the parts of the body; like your fingers to write and your legs to walk. Joints are just bones that meet together with other bones to help these bones bend and revolve the skin. If you didn't have joints you would be as stiff as a board. But the most important thing...

To encourage continued writing Norma Foster published the children's writing with quality. Giving time and presence to the children's work adds credibility to the purpose of writing--it's for reading. The book is carefully bound so that it doesn't fall apart the first time it is picked up.

Include an Introduction telling how the book came to be, sharing the purpose and hard work of the class:

### Forword

Our class has enjoyed studying the human body this semester, so we decided to make a class book about the different parts of the body. We hope you enjoy our book as much as others have. Here's how we made our book:

1. Mrs. Foster read to the class The Important Book. We decided to use the pattern: The most important thing about . . . .

2. We chose what part of the body that we wanted to write about.

3. We discussed the three parts of a paragraph.

4. Then we discussed, in our small groups, the contents of the paragraph.

5. Next Mrs. Foster took dictation from a recorder of each group.

6. Mrs. Foster typed the paragraphs.

7. People volunteered to illustrate each paragraph.

8. Mrs. Foster dry-mounted the pictures, laminated and bound the pages

With a library card in the back of a student-authored book, youngsters are able to check it out overnight to share with family and friends. A "Readers' Comment" page is a good way to encourage parents, grandparents and friends to respond to the children's writing. Here are some samples of what parents said about the fifth graders' book on the human body:

> Several features of this book impress me. First, is the fact that the theme, "The Most Important Thing About. . . ." is consistent throughout. This type of organization is rare even in works by adults. Secondly, as a tool for learning, it leaves an indelible impression of the most important body of information on the reader's mind. Thirdly, is that it is so professionally executed. And finally, the realization that it was done by a fifth grade class expands our awareness of the excellence that this level can achieve when given the opportunity and the guidance.
>
> Mary Dumon
>
> I think this book is so wonderful. It is well written and the illustrations are superb.
>
> Gail Garber
>
> Congratulations! Your book is just beautiful. . . .
>
> Dee Baur

As a follow-up, Norma Foster's class talked and wrote about how they felt to be authors:

> "Writing the class book helped to put things in order." Suzanne Baur.
>
> "It's like working, except it makes the working fun." Sam Slagle.
>
> "Helped me learn new vocabulary words." Ben Carson.
>
> "The best part of making the book was drawing the pictures. It encouraged me to draw again." Steve Valdez.
>
> "It made me feel good because other people will read our book and realize that they can do the same thing." Rhonda Beck.

"Writing a book keeps you out of trouble." Sean Fox

"I felt like I had accomplished something. . . .I didn't know there was so much talent in our class." Tiffany Keeling.

"I feel good about writing books and want to write lots more." Christi Garber.

"I liked the poem I wrote for the class book so well that I decided to write a poem for my book." Scott Wheelwright.

After contributing the poem, "Muscles," to the class book, Scott Wheelwright went home and wrote a second book, The ABC's of Olympic Ice Hockey, with a poem for each letter of the alphabet:

A is for Americans
Hockey team number 1
When you play the USA
You'll be glad when you're done.

B is for Bingo
When the USA gets a score
The longer you play them
The more they get more.

Scott Wheelwright published a limited edition of five copies of The ABC's of Olympic Ice Hockey, including one for the school library. He said, "It was a lot of hard work making it, but the feeling of accomplishment made it all worth it. . ."

An important question about writing may be, "Does a youngster choose to write again?" To assist youngsters in the writing process and to keep up with the demands of publishing, set up a support system in your school. A "Drop In Writing Center" staffed by parent volunteers can provide a publishing place--it becomes a Random House down the hall, a Doubleday in the Library. All of the supplies and materials for illustrating, printing, and binding are gathered in a space provided in the hallway, library or empty classroom. Here, young people find assistance in writing, editing and publishing their ideas. The volunteers can make additional copies of books--a classroom copy as well as one for the author.

Avery Elementary School in Webster Groves, Missouri has a publishing house featured in the St. Louis Post Dispatch on Friday April 18, 1980. John J. Archibald writes:

> These books won't make any bestseller lists because only one copy of each is produced, but they are part of a project in the Webster Groves School District that may lead to a new enthusiasm for reading and writing in an era when such skills are said to be on a decline.

The "publishing house" is situated in an office in Avery School. The employees are a group of 25 parents who volunteer from a few hours to few days a week to transform the efforts of children from kindergarten through sixth grade into professional-looking products.

Crowded into the office are machines for binding, sewing and laminating, a large-key typewriter, and scraps of colored cloth and wallpaper (for bookcovers). The school's Parent-Teacher Organization contributed $400 to buy some equipment and the parents scrounged for the rest.

" 'Publishing' the children's writing is a tremendous motivator," said John Miller, principal of Avery. "Educators get a lot of flak because some youngsters don't know how to write. This excites those who ordinarily would have little interest in writing, and gets them started early."

Part of the appeal, apparently, is the fact that parents are invited to participate along with teachers in such programs as the book publishing.

Barbara Collier, a parent, acknowledged that the enthusiasm of the children and adults is mutual.

"When we are finishing the binding of one of the books," said Mrs. Collier, "it's just like a baby being born."

When you start publishing, expect the good word to spread. Chad Johnson's My First Book of Poems, like all the books from the drop-in writing center, bears a book plate advertising "The Avery Publishing House." In Mehlville, Missouri, Tracy Van Fleet's book, You know It's A Bad Day When, has the publication stamp "A Point Publication" on the title page indicating it was bound at Point Elementary School's drop-in writing center. At Radio Station KSLH, the St. Louis "Reading is Terrific Show" encourages youngsters as part of a Title I Parent Advisory Activity to send in their writing to be published with quality--typed, mounted on construction paper, and bound.

Next, to continue encouraging youngsters to write again, read to them. Read the books you love. Read the poetry you care about. Read aloud student-authored books. To read aloud the books you love is another way to share your interest and encourage youngsters to read and write. Bill Martin, Jr. asks, "What are the ten, fifteen, twenty books that are you?" What are the books that a child might expect to hear you read aloud? Librarians from coast to coast share that the books most often checked out of libraries are the books that have been read aloud.

Children believe us when we give time and presence to an activity. By giving the writing of youngsters the quality of your good reading voice, you are saying that you value what your class has written in the same way that you value your favorite published authors and poets from New York or Chicago. Share a piece of student writing by saying, "I've a new bestseller to read to you." After reading the selection, introduce the writer to the rest of the class. You might say, "Would you like to meet the author? He (or she) is sitting right over there."

Do you know what it's like to be applauded after your book has been read? Young people support one another when they know there is not just one right answer. When they know they can get equal billing--that an excerpt from their own writing will also be shared by the teacher--youngsters will begin to spontaneously applaud after a classmate's piece has been read.

A Young Authors' Conference, a day when writing is celebrated, is another effective strategy for encouraging youngsters to write again. Young people come together to read aloud a favorite piece of their writing whether it be from a class, group, or individually-authored book. Children sit down in small groups with a group leader and share their writing by reading aloud.

Ley Yeager from Riverside, California organized a Young Authors' Conference and advertised it by having a youngster carry a scroll to each classroom:

> Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
>
> Come one, come all to Washington School's 1st Annual Young Authors' Conference. Read and be Read!
>
> On Wednesday, May 23, Washington School will host a Young Authors' Conference. It will be held from 1:30 until 3:30 in the afternoon. All you need to join in the fun is a book that you have written or done the drawings for. The book must be bound in some way.
>
> At the conference, you will have a chance to share your book with other young authors and to see and read what they have created. Also, you will be able to take part in workshops of many kinds, which will be run by your teachers, our principal, our school secretaries and our custodians. Each young author will receive an award for participating in the Washington School Young Authors' Conference, and punch and cookies will be served.

Schools in St. Louis, Webster Groves, Mehlville, Wentzville, and Hazelwood, Missouri sponsor a day in the spring of the year where young people have an opportunity to meet with other student authors. There are no winners or losers--the time is set aside to celebrate the writing that has occurred throughout the school year and to encourage youngsters to continue to write.

In summary, youngsters can write about what they know about, what they care about, what they're interested in, and what they've just done. They can use an easy-to-identify, read-aloud pattern as a springboard to help them get started in their writing. Through the publishing process, young people have opportunities to confirm what they know they know, and to see themselves being read by others.

A "Drop In Writing Center" provides assistance in the typing and assembling of student books. A Young Authors' Conference celebrates the writing that has been going on all year. In lots of ways, teachers, parents, the school, and even the community can not only encourage youngsters to begin writing, but can also give them support to continue writing. The important question about writing may be, "Does a child choose to write again?"

Through the process of writing, editing, and publishing in classrooms, youngsters become active language producers; they know, as Bill Martin, Jr. says, that "Writing is for Reading."

NOTE: An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the York University "Reading '79" conference, Toronto, Ontario, Feb. 1979.

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# FIRST GRADERS MEET LANGSTON HUGHES--AND THEY, TOO SING AMERICA

Clara McCrary
Hawthorne School, University City

Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary School serves a racially mixed, middle-income suburban community. The student population, however, reflects the flight of whites from the public schools: 317 Black, 22 White, and 5 Vietnamese children are enrolled, and all 26 pupils in my current first grade class are Black. My decision to introduce Langston Hughes in the first grade emerged last summer from a lengthy discussion on racial issues with one of my sisters, who is also an educator. We reflected on the low status of Blacks throughout the world, and we wondered about the Black youth of today, comparing their general acceptance of their heritage with our ambivalence toward Blackness when we were in elementary school. Yet most children complete eight years of elementary school with little knowldege of the depth and vitality of the Black contribution to America's culture, and I realized that I had done very little to help. I knew that I wanted to be one of the teachers who would plant a seed of Black pride and unity in each of my pupils. This year, I decided, my language arts program would focus on speaking, reading, and writing in response to the work of Langston Hughes.

For the past eight years I have sucessfully taught first graders to read and write independently, using a multi-sensory approach which lent itself very easily to my chosen theme. I first introduce several consonants and vowels; my pupils study the shape of each letter, hear its sound, say it, then write it. After reviewing this sequence--see, hear, say, and write--for the selected letters, they learn to blend letters into words and words into phrases, sentences, and finally original compositions. The drive to communicate, to write, motivates these children, as Carol Chomsky points out in "Write First, Read Later" (1971); by the end of November, 1980, almost all of my 26 first graders could read and write effectively on or above grade level. In the same month they heard for the first time the name Langston Hughes.

For the next ten weeks, through the Langston Hughes Language Arts Project, my pupils and I would lead one another toward an appreciation of a gifted poet and toward a meaningful acceptance of our individual and our united Blackness. The children first met Langston Hughes through hearing my dramatic reading of several poems. To vary my presentations I recorded tapes of his poetry and made transparencies for an overhead projector; the children talked about the illustrated texts while they listened to the recorded poems. Because many of the poem demanded some background information on the social setting and language, I involved the small children in discussions of concepts like Jim Crow, slavery, ennui, segregation, integration, and deferred dreams. My pupils heard over twenty poems by Langston Hughes, twelve of which were dittoed so that the children had their own personal copies. Some of the poems from their modest collection are "Troubled Woman," "Merry-Go-Round," "I, Too, Sing America," "A Dream Deferred," "Ennui," "Poem," and "Color."

Because I wanted Langston Hughes to be a role model for my children, giving them pride in his greatness as a writer, I secured as much of his published work as I could find in various libraries and displayed it all—books, pamphlets, and magazine articles—on our library table. The children were indeed overwhelmed that one Black man had written so much. They could not, of course, read most of it, but they enjoyed browsing, and his Pictorial History of Black America was a favorite. Next I asked the children to bring pictures from home of Black children, Black families, and Black workers who they felt belonged to the world of Langston Hughes. The following day they cut out their pictures and placed them in a large box, named the "Langston Hughes Black Family Box." They reread and discussed some of the poems, then illustrated them with pictures from the large box, or with their own original drawings.

One poem in particular made a deep impression on my pupils; it was "Troubled Woman":

### TROUBLED WOMAN

by Langston Hughes

She stands
In the quiet darkness,
This troubled woman
Bowed by
Weariness and pain
Like an
Autumn flower
In the frozen rain,
Like a
Wind-blown autumn flower
That never lifts its head
Again.

After I read this poem a hush remained in the classroom. Then one little boy, staring at the transparency of the woman next to the poem, asked, "Is the lady crying?" His question, his serious look, his troubled tone, and the intense faces of all my little first graders made that a memorable moment. Later that day another child asked me to write the name of the poem on a piece of paper because she wanted her mother to read it. Two days later the girl's mother called to request a copy of "Troubled Woman," and soon other parents sent requests for copies of the Black poetry their children were studying. This enthusiasm of the children and their parents was an early and gratifying reward.

A rush of "Troubled" poems were among the first to emerge from the minds of my children. "Magic Circle" time, during which my children usually discuss any topic they wish, became a prewriting session. I learned that they could relate "Troubled" to many facets of their own lives, to times when they felt a person or very often a pet had troubles. Because I did not want the ideas to evaporate or lose the spontaneity and vividness of our discussions, I suggested we immediately try to pen (or pencil!) our thoughts. And because I am always a participant in whatever writing project my class is doing, I wrote also. The ideas of Kenneth Koch on teaching great poetry to children (Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? 1973), and of Jacque Wuertenberg on using poetry patterns (Helping Children Become Writers, 1980) were familiar to me through the Gateway Writing Project. Just as Koch and Wuertenberg help students read and write as part of the same lesson, so I let my children experience the poetry of Langston Hughes and then write, making his work a springboard for their own poetry:

### TROUBLED DOG

by Carissa Keely
Age 7

A dog has troubles when he's very bad
Now ain't that sad?
What can a dog do thats very bad?
Tear up paper and wet the floore
And get his tail put out the door.
A dog has trubles when he's very bad.
Now ain't that sad?

### TROUBLED CAT

by Lenard Pegues
Age 7

My cat
will have to leeve my house
because
she cannot catch a mouse
My Mom
She doesn't like my cat.
Poor troubled cat--she won't get fat.

### TROUBLED BROTHER AND ME

by Kimya Killin
Age 6

One day me and jimmy were playing
checkers and jimmy was cheting.
Then when jimmy was cheting
he thrue the checker bord
at me and I cry then I thrue it at him
then we got in trouble. he's relly a troubled
brother.

## TROUBLED TEACHER

by Clara McCrary
Age—over 6

I stand
at the chalkboard daily
Trying
to get every child to know
Addition Facts, Subtraction Facts, and
Facts about Greater-than and Less-than but shucks!
Just when I think they've got it down pat
Someone gets it all turned around
and I'd like to pitch my chalkboard right on the ground.
What's wrong with you guys, anyway?
Can't you remember any of the stuff I say?

(I had many admirers after this masterpiece, and requests for copies of "Troubled Teacher." Ironically, at least seven children claimed to be the "someone" who always got the math facts wrong.)

No time limit was set for the first draft, but after fifteen minutes most writers were ready and willing to share their "Troubled" poems. Because my students are very young, there is rarely the fear of censure or failure that may block older students. Whatever my uninhibited first graders think, they will say, and whatever they say, they will boldly attempt to write. Of course at grade one, all the writing wasn't poetry, but even the little stories or sentences we called poetry.

Not only was this a first experience for my class in writing poems but it was also a first experience in peer editing. We set up five groups of about five children each. A group leader was selected to assure order in each group and to report on group progress at the end of the session. Each child was assigned a number for oral reading--since first graders nearly all want to be first. I moved from group to group reading my "Troubled" poem and listening to theirs. As I moved through the editing groups, I felt that my cup was running over. The noise level was a little high, but the productivity was exhilarating.

I encouraged the children to comment on the poetry they heard and to scan the drafts of all members of their groups for spelling and punctuation errors. From the first week of school, my class had been taught to "proofread" (circle errors) rather than to erase mistakes in their written work; since they saw proofreading as a second chance at success, they felt no discouragement from being told that there were ways to improve their writing. After the peer editing process, the children were given lined ditto masters so that they could re-draft their work.

Six copies of this second draft of each poem were duplicated, and the next day these were shared with group members and me. Seeing their own work dittoed delighted the children, and most asked to take home not only the copy but the ditto master as well. At this second peer editing session, the comments were more sophisticated, ranging from the simple, "I like your poem very much," to the more comprehensive, "Your poem is interesting, but I don't understand why you say your cat won't get fat--was it just to make your poem rhyme?" The children left this session with copies of both their own and group members' poetry stapled to take home.

Because first graders are not usually aware of the plight of Blacks, I introduced the poem," I, Too," with a discussion of slavery and race relations in the United States.

## I, TOO

by Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed--

I, too, am America.

Later I took my pupils to see the Walt Disney film, "Song of the South." I hesitated exposing them to such a distorted view of slave life, but decided to let them try to deal with the issues; their response was impressive. As one child stated, "I think the film was false. It made the slaves seem always happy but being a slave must have been a terrible, sorrowful way to live." Seeing the film and relating it to "I, Too," led many pupils to draw smiling strong Black children and American flags on their copies of the poem.

### I, TOO SING AMERICA

by Tené Webb
Age 6

When I go to collige and get a good job, I will know how to sing about America like the white peeple do. Dark people belong here too. And yellow peeple and red peeple sing America.

"A Dream Deferred" led my pupils to express the dreams, wishes, and aspirations they have shelved for one reason or another:

### HARLEM (A DREAM DEFERRED)

by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

When one boy asked how could a dream explode, I suppressed the obvious answer, for I knew that to talk of a Black revolution with a first grade class would have upset my administrators as well as many of the parents. But the idea of deferred dreams captivated the children so much that they pleaded to write poems about dreams like Langston Hughes. At "Magic Circle" time they were bubbling with tales of their own dreams and wishes. Each child was allowed one minute or less to express an idea, and then the group asked if they could write. The sharing was oral, this time without peer editing. I made a tape recording of their recitations and later I made visual copies. The results reminded me of Kenneth Koch's Wishes, Lies, and Dreams (1970):

### A DREAM DEFERRED

by Tené Webb
Age 6

I used to wish that I had a bike. but my mom was scared I might get hurt and skin my knees and tear my shirt.

So I had to wait till I got bigger and now next year I'll get my bike and my dream deferred will be my dream coming true.

## A DREAM BLOWN UP

by Latisha Cody
Age 6

How can a dream ixplode?
If your ride in a plane and it crashis
you and your dream ixplode.

## WISHING

by Kevin First
Age 6

Wishing is stupid. It won't come true no way.
I'm not going to wish about nothing.

## DREAMING

by Joseph Butler
Age 7

When I see Incredible Hulk on T.V.
I used to wish that I were he
So one night in my dreams it all
came true.
It was scary when my clothes
busted off of me and I
knocked down stuff and grew and grew.
That's a dream I don't want to see
again, boy I'll tell you!
And now I don't wish to be
Incredible Hulk anymore but just
a plain boy. I guess that's how
a dream explodes.

The poem "Baby" was a favorite:

## BABY

by Langston Hughes

Albert!
Hey, Albert!
Don't you play in dat road,
  You see dem trucks
  A goin' by.
  One run ovah you
  An' you die.
Albert, don't you play in dat road.

The class could relate to an adult who scolded because of concern for a child's safety. The simple strategy of repeating the first line of the poem at the end was imitated by many children in their own "Baby" poems. In our discussions the group decided that it was a mother, rather than a father, scolding the child, although two children suggested it could be a grandmother or aunt. Perhaps significantly, not one of my children felt that it could be a male voice speaking. My pupils also decided that "Albert" was a pretty mischievous kid, probably always in some kind of precarious position. One child spontaneously shouted out at the end of the poem, "You little rascal, you!"—and the line stayed. Whenever the poem was read thereafter, the class always chorused their own line as an annexation.

## IN BED

by Donnene Fulton
Age 7

Hey Donnene, get up out of that bed
You sleepy head!
I dont want to get up and
do no work.
I like to sleep and stay in bed.
Yes, I'm a sleepy head.
Hey, Donnene, get up out of that bed,
You sleepy head!

## BABY

by Vera Wooten
Age 6

Vera, Hey Vera!
Don't you play with that glass!
You see that glass all broke around
You'll cut yourself and fall down
and have to get a band aid.
Hey Vera
Don't you play with that glass.

## BABY

by Tené Webb
Age 6

Tene Hey Tene!
Stop rocking in that chair
You'll fall backards and bust your head
and maybe you might even be dead.
Tene Stop rocking in that chair.

Close imitation of the poems was not my aim; I wanted my children to discover and re-create for themselves some of the essence of Hughes' poetry. Yet in many cases there was imitation, almost to the point of plagiarism, for which they felt no guilt. I noted that the children intuitively sensed the different styles in Hughes' work. Their writing modelled on "A Dream Deferred" tended to approximate standard English--like the formal diction of the poem--while their writing modelled on the dialect poem "Baby" tended to adopt a similar voice.

It's ironic that even after teaching first graders for nearly twenty years, I can not always anticipate their reactions. For instance I felt sure that "Merry Go Round" would appeal to my class: "On the bus we're put in the back. . . Where's the horse for a kid that's black?" They laughed, but there was only one comment: "There's no back to a merry-go-round, what's wrong with him?" With a few "Yeahs" the discussion ended--we did not produce any "Merry-Go-Round" poems.

On the other hand, "Ennui" was a great favorite.

### ENNUI

by Langston Hughes

It's such a
Bore
Being Always
Poor.

The word intrigued my children because it was unfamiliar and because its spelling defied sounding out. "Ennui" became the expression whenever they did not like what was going on in the classroom: "Math gives me ennui!"

### ENNUI

by Tené Webb
Age 6

It's ennui to do a lots of math
and its ennui when you have to take a nap.
But it's not ennui to play outside and
eat popsikles.

P.S. Ennui means boring and dull.

In January I brought from our school library a biography entitled Langston Hughes, Poet of His People. I read aloud information about the poet, retold some of the stories in dramatic form, and showed pictures. But it was the childhood of Langston Hughes that appealed most, and thus it became our focus.

My first graders next wrote an original play—a series of scenes from the poet's early life. Each day they worked on the project. Various children would contribute a sentence or two, reading this narration aloud while a small group performed the action. From day to day, the scenes changed as the children learned more about Langston's boyhood and as they put more of themselves into the characters. One day they pantomimed a scene of Langston, his mother, and his grandmother sitting on a train while the grandmother read Bible stories to him; another day, they played the scene with Langston getting up and stumbling down the aisle of the apparently-moving train to get a drink of water. It was a simple play yet beautiful, for they wrote it with love and enthusiasm for their subject. I was pleased.

Finally we completed booklets of original illustrated poetry inspired by the works of Langston Hughes. We bound the booklets with construction paper, pasting on the covers cut-out flowers and the letters, "Langston Hughes' Poetry and Mine Too." On the right side of each booklet I stapled the copies of Hughes' poetry, and on the left I stapled sheets of lined paper for the child's work.

On Tuesday, February 17, my class waited nervously to present the culminating activity of the project while I addressed fifty to sixty parents and a few teachers assembled in the school auditorium. I explained the significance of the Langston Hughes Language Arts Project and introduced the audience to the poet's life and works. I shared with them my hopes for the future of their children. I stressed the importance of education, of learning to read, to write, and to speak effectively. Equally I stressed the need for our children to believe in their self-worth and to take pride in our African heritage. I spoke of our need for heroes, and suggested that Langston Hughes be viewed as a model, a hero, for the Black parent as well as for the Black child. When we are moved by people like Langston Hughes, deferred dreams based on race will be things of the past. I closed revealing how much I too had learned through the Langston Hughes Language Arts Project.

Applause warmed the auditorium. The children entered and their play began, followed by their poetic dance and readings of their original poems. Imagine twenty-six Black boys and girls, six and seven years old, uniting confident fledgling voices to affirm, " 'We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. . .' " They, too, sing America.

Note: An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Langston Hughes Study Conference at Missouri Southern State College, Joplin, MO, Feb. 13-14, 1981.

# MATHEMATICS AND THE ART OF WRITING

Jerry Kennedy
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Growing up in the "olden" days, we accepted it as a fact of life that our arithmetic must be doggedly pursued as a dull, prosaic, frightening entity. We would be regarded as traitors to the cause if we suggested in muted tones that perhaps there might be a more interesting and creative way to teach arithmetic. Of course, the teacher would most certainly say that anyone who suggested an alternative was intruding upon her territorial rights--imagine a pupil being a partner with an adult in creating an arithmetic program!

Mercifully, this is behind me now, and I have become aware of a whole new world out there where writing and mathematics can become the best of friends, helping and supporting each other.

Each new school year is a challenge to keep my pupils motivated, open-minded, and eager to share their enthusiasm and ideas in a working partnership with me. The following are some ideas that I will be implementing in my classroom--perhaps they will help you teach mathematics with a new perspective. . . .

## 1. Story Problems

Encourage the pupils to create their own story problems geared to their level of interest and life style. If a child can relate his individual experiences to the objects used in a math story problem, he will be much more inclined to remember and apply the math concepts involved. All these problems and other materials that the pupils help write and create can be saved in a special, decorated folder, to be perused by other pupils and also worked as part of your math program. It is a good idea for the teacher to save a second copy, Xeroxed, for future reference.

The children gain a sense of self-esteem if they know at the beginning of the year that you depend upon them to help you, the teacher, put together the year's math program as you go along day by day. Their story problems can be serious or humorous, according to their decision. The important thing is to get the concept across with a sense of joy and accomplishment. The formal math book the pupil is issued is a tool, but actually only one of the tools, not the whole tool chest.

My fifth graders begin with a simple, basic operational problem using one step. As their skill increases, the story problem can evolve into a series of events whereby they will actually apply definite writing skills. Most children will use their own names in a story problem with the names of friends and pets taking a secondary place!

Sample Story Problem

On my way to school this morning, I noticed two thick strings wiggling on the sidewalk. I stooped down and saw that they were big, fat worms. I decided to give them both a name and write about them for my math folder. So, Willie the worm and Wilma the worm were playing a really slow game of tag on the sidewalk and decided to have a race. Willie started out at 9:15 A.M. and made it to the corner by 10:12 A.M. How long did it take Willie? Wilma started out at 9:24 A.M. and made it to the corner by 10:48. How long did it take Wilma to finish the race? Which worm won the race and by how many minutes?

(This could be developed further in writing form by having them both meet other characters who would insist that they detour for a "shortcut.")

Writing out a story problem into a more fully developed form takes time; a teacher should encourage this effort and should not expect a whole series of problems at once.

Another Story Problem

Robert the rubberband had a classmate named Rupert the rubberband. They were really good friends and always played together at recess. One day, a new pupil came into the class--and she was a girl—a real pretty one! Well, then the fun started. The two rubberbands started showing off. Robert said, "Heck, I can stretch myself 42 inches!" Rupert said, "So what, I can stretch 1 3/4 yards--top that!" Who actually did stretch the farthest? Do you think they stayed friends?

### 2. Graph Stories

Another mode of writing children can practice is to keep track of their own scores in math by graphing. This can be done with two or more colors for visual effectiveness. The pupils can make either a bar or line graph. Some may even invent their own graph form. They might write special names for certain math concepts on the vertical or horizontal axis. Pupils can be encouraged to write about their scores—to describe their graphs and explain why they did better on a particular day.

### 3. Secret Codes

How about having your pupils design their own numeration systems and write out simple stories using their codes? Codes can also be keyed to the alphabet, or a number can be coded into a letter equivalent by a series of math operations. The activities can be geared to the level of the pupil.

4. Math Crossword

Pupils can be asked to perform mathematical operations and spell out the answers on the crossword puzzle.

Pupils can design math crossword puzzles by arranging various operational and mathematical terms to form the crossword puzzle. Use regular graphing paper as an easy aid in keeping the letters straight.

5. Weather Chart

How about having your pupils keep a math weather chart, complete with temperature, pressure, and rainfall? Besides recording the information on the weather chart, the pupils can write about how the weather affected the class that particular day. Could you play outside, or did you have indoor recess? How many times did you look out the window--and what did you see?

6. "At Home" Work

How about involving the child's parents in an individual way with math? The pupils can make out a worksheet for the parents to complete at home. For instance, the pupil can write a short story about the importance of eating the correct foods daily. The parents can fill in a menu plan that the child has worked out, listing when and how much from each food group was eaten. Furthering this idea, perhaps the child could become involved with recipes, measuring, listing, and counting ingredients.

After introducing the metric system in your classroom, have the pupils line-draw a simple plan of their room or any room in their home. Together with their parents, they can measure this room in the metric system and write a description of their room. The parents probably would be grateful if they were first allowed to measure the room using our numeration system and their child could change the measurements to the metric system!

Ask pupils to write about their allowances. How much do you receive? Are you expected to perform any chores? How did you spend your allowance? Itemize for a week or a month. If you had twice as much, how would you spend it?

7. Keeping Roll

Pupils can keep their own attendance charts, listing days, number of times, and coded reasons for absence in graph form. They can periodically total up their days present and absent. Pupils might also like to write about how it was to be sick or away from their classmates on a certain day.

8. Class Book of Records

Children are very egocentric and love to keep a numerical track of how many times somebody else "did" something, how many times they already did a job, how many steps they must walk to get to the door, etc. Capitalize on this and ask them to write about their feelings at this particular time.

They might also list and write about facts pertaining to their own situation at home--how many children, how many hours of sleep, school, homework, or chores.

There are many more ways that writing and math can be combined. These are just a few that I will be using in my classroom. I teach math to 31 sixth graders, 30 fourth graders, and 23 fifth graders, so I get quite an overview of how different strategies work. Ask the kids for ideas, too—we can learn a lot from them!

The pattern is simple: start by keeping numerical records; then enrich the learning process by writing about the material involved.

Certainly, mathematics must have a perimeter, but let's try to soften the edges by expressing our creative thoughts about the process involved. . . .

# SCHOOL WRITING ASSESSMENT: A FIRST STEP TOWARD WRITING-ACROSS-THE-CURRICULUM

Anne Wright
Hazelwood West High School

Students are writing papers on the bleachers in P.E. classes, on their work tables in industrial arts, at lab tables in science classes, and at their regular desks in math, English, and social studies. Artists are expressing themselves in words rather than pictures. One principal says, "I've never heard such silence!" For thirty minutes, all other activities cease at Hazelwood West High School as eighteen hundred students write on the topic "What do teenagers worry about?"

At Hazelwood West High School the Communications Department sponsored an all-school writing assessment in the fall of 1979. We had two major aims: to determine the level of our students' writing ability and to emphasize the importance of teaching writing skills. Several methods of carrying out such a writing assessment are possible. English teachers can test all the students in their English classes; a committee can choose a random sample of students for testing; teachers may decide to test all students in the school during the same class period. As chairman of the committee in charge of making arrangements for the assessment, I wanted to involve as many students and teachers as possible, especially in our first attempt at assessment; therefore, I suggested that we test all students in grades nine through twelve during one class hour, wherever they happened to be that period. Not all teachers in other subject areas were ecstatic about the idea (some felt we were taking an hour of their time to teach English and resented it), but most teachers cooperated cheerfully. The procedure was explained to all teachers in a memo from the principal. The mechanics of setting up such an undertaking were complicated and time-consuming. My committee of five volunteers spent many more hours helping prepare materials than any of us realized would be involved when we started. Preparation included the following steps:

1. Choosing a topic for students to write on and deciding how much time to give them (we chose "What do teenagers worry about?" as the topic and gave students thirty minutes to write.)

2. Preparing a master sheet to be copied for each student with the topic and instructions printed at the top and lines for students to write on.

3. Sending a memo to all teachers a month in advance, telling them the date, the time, and the purposes of the assessment and requesting their cooperation.

4. Establishing codes for teachers and students so that papers would be anonymous for scoring.

5. Preparing a master sheet to be copied for each teacher with spaces for names of students and code numbers.

6. Preparing an instruction sheet for teachers to use on the day of the assessment.

7. Preparing packets containing writing sheets for students, instructions for teachers, and roll and code number sheets.

8. Delivering the packets to teachers the class period before the assessment was held. (Students did this for us.)

9. Granting an interview for a school newspaper article explaining the assessment to the students.

10. Preparing reminders for the daily bulletin for two days preceding the assessment.

In spite of all our apprehensions, the procedure ran very smoothly on assessment day. Once the assessment period was over, we started procedures to evaluate the papers. The assessment committee stayed after school one day for three hours, reading sample papers and writing a rubric for holistic scoring. Then we had copies made, for all English teachers, of the sample papers and the rubric. A few weeks after the assessment, the school district had a released day for teacher conferences, and the English teachers used that day to score the assessment papers.

We used general impression holistic scoring and had two people score each paper on a scale from one to six. We held a training session before we started, using the sample papers and rubric, and short retraining sessions after each break. In approximately five hours time, twenty teachers scored about eighteen hundred papers (remember, each paper was scored twice!) If a discrepancy of more than two points occurred between the two scores, a different team of teachers scored the paper again. The assessment committee members served as organizers and paper-sorters (each paper had to be returned to its own packet because of the coding system), but we also helped score papers. This scoring sounds tedious, and we all dreaded it, but we found the student papers to be fascinating reading. The committee had brought doughnuts and sweet rolls, and the cafeteria furnished coffee for our frequent breaks. The time passed much more quickly than we had expected; we were amazed that we had scored so many papers in such a short time.

The next job was to record the students' scores on the roll sheet in each packet. We had copies made of these score sheets and returned the copies to the teachers, who were then able to tell students their scores. We sent along with this score sheet a set of handouts explaining the rubric, so that each student could understand what the scores meant. The students displayed great interest in their scores. Many hadn't taken the assessment very seriously on the day we did the writing and were quite upset with their low scores. Those with high scores were very proud of themselves. The return of the scores prompted an editorial in the school newspaper to the effect that we should have made the students take the assessment more seriously. I thought that comment was a bit ironic, because we had done everything we could to explain that, although the writing wouldn't have any effect on grades, it was important to do their best. I answered the editorial with a letter to the editor in which I tried again to explain the goals and the scoring. Having been through the experience once, the students will probably take the assessment more seriously when we do it again.

The final, and most tedious, job was compiling the statistics to see what we had learned. We had to take our copies of the score sheets and make lists of the number of people at each grade level who made each of the possible scores. Once we had these figures, the "Probability and Statistics" class in our math department made graphs for each grade and for the total school population, showing the numbers of students who made each score in each grade and in the total population and also showing the percentages of students making each score. The teacher, Charles Owens, was happy to have a real problem for his class to work on, the students were interested in the results because they had participated in the assessment, and I was pleased to get the math department involved in the writing program. Our aim for future years is to have higher numbers of students making higher scores. We can use the assessment as a means of measuring growth both in individual students and in the student body as a whole.

So much for the mechanics of carrying out a writing assessment. What I really want to stress is the total school involvement in this process. We had students writing in every class in school during third hour; every third hour teacher was involved. After all the papers were scored and the results returned to the students, I wrote a summary of our findings about the strengths and weaknesses of our students' writing, with suggestions for ways teachers across the curriculum could help students to overcome the weaknesses.

Some teachers evidently ignored the summary, but others, even some who had thought the whole project was a waste of time, stopped me in the hall or mentioned in the lounge that they found the results interesting. Perhaps some may even try some of the suggestions!

The first part of the report to teachers summarized the worries most frequently mentioned by the students, as I felt that their comments provided some valuable insights. This part of the report said:

> We discovered several worries that seem to be common among almost all the students. The most mentioned worry was peer approval. Students seem to have an underlying worry that they will do things that they really don't want to do because of peer pressure. They also worry about what they are going to do when they get out of school. Another worry frequently expressed concerned the energy crisis; students feel that they aren't prepared to cope with the problems caused by an energy shortage. Grades in school also cause

> some students to worry. Many students seem to have concerns about sex and preganancy. And they practically all worry about their complexions!

Then I discussed some common problems in the writing itself. The first area was spelling. The report stated:

> We especially noticed the frequency of errors on *worry*, *pregnant*, *their*/ *there*/ *they're*, *whether*, and *peer*. Even papers receiving high ratings often contained some of these errors.
>
> If you would like to help students with spelling, a constructive approach might be to give students lists of words you expect them to spell correctly--not only specialized terms for your subject area, but also other words you notice being misspelled by many students--and ask them to learn them. You could give quizzes on short groups of words, but it is also important to hold students responsible for spelling the words correctly on all written work.
>
> It does not seem fair to count answers wrong for misspelling if the answer is correct, unless the students have been warned ahead of time, but you might take off a certain number of points from the final grade for an excessive number of errors or add on extra points for perfect spelling.

Organization of ideas was the next writing problem I discussed. My suggestions were as follows:

> Some students showed surprising ability to organize their ideas in such a short period of time, but many just seemed to write ideas down as they occurred to them.
>
> Teachers who are interested in helping students develop organizational skills could take advantage of many classroom situations to teach how to classify ideas and show their relationships to each other. For example, when a topic is under discussion, write ideas on the board just as they are mentioned. Then ask students to try to group the ideas into categories and give each category a name. This is a kind of outlining, of course, but if you avoid telling the students that, they will accept this technique more readily. Also urge students to discuss the *relationships* between the categories. The inability to see how ideas are related to each other is a weakness that frequently surfaces in student writing. Our students need practice in deciding which ideas are parallel to each other and which are subordinate to others. All of these skills can be practiced through

> the activity described above, and it should work for discussion on any topic. It is the kind of activity that you can use often to reinforce learning.

A history teacher can employ the techniques suggested above in a discussion of the Civil War. He or she can have students name all the causes they can think of while one student writes them on the board. Next the teacher can lead the students in a discussion to determine which are basic causes. Then the group can consider whether some of the suggestions are irrelevant and whether some important causes have been omitted. Relationships between causes can be established (the link between slavery and economics, for example). Frequent repetition of this process should sharpen students' skills in analysis and synthesis.

On capitalization and punctuation I made the following suggestions:

> It probably comes as no surprise to you that students are very careless about punctuating and capitalizing correctly. In our defense, we English teachers do teach these skills, but they need constant reinforcement in all subject areas. Capitalizing correctly is a matter of memorization; students must memorize what kinds of words require capital letters. If specialized terms in your subject area require capital letters, insist that students capitalize them. For example, students need to be taught to capitalize words like Fahrenheit in science and World War II in history. Of course, you also need to insist that students use lower case letters for words that should not be capitalized. If you allow students to print, it is a good idea to insist that they not print in all capital letters.
>
> Punctuation is a much more complex subject, as it involves understanding sentence structure. We teach sentence structure from third grade through twelfth, but some students never learn it very well. Therefore, in classes in other subject areas, we hope you will stress the importance of correct punctuation and insist on marks that are critical to understanding. For more sophisticated punctuation, such as proper use of colons, dashes, and even semicolons, you will probably have to show your students how to use them correctly and be somewhat forgiving of errors. Even the best writers make errors occasionally in punctuation; many published writers depend on editors to correct their punctuation. Probably the most abused mark is the comma; the rules covering the use of the comma are numerous, and they are all based on sentence structure. It would be helpful to point out comma errors that you notice and explain what is wrong and why, but, considering how many adults succeed very well in written communication without a detailed knowledge of comma rules, it seems prudent to insist on commas only when they are needed for clarity. We have a style book in the district which the English Department wrote about five years ago.

> It covers the basic punctuation rules. Teachers may obtain copies in the English Department center.

The final writing problem the report dealt with concerned sentence fragments and run-on sentences:

> "Sentence sense" is very difficult to teach. You can help students develop "sentence sense" by requiring sentences instead of phrases in all written work. When you start doing this, you will probably need to write some as examples on the board. For example, if the assignment is answering questions on a worksheet, require the answers to be written in sentences, but write the first few answers on the board to demonstrate, because many students simply don't understand what you mean by complete sentence. However, they can follow your example.
>
> Run-on sentences are really a punctuation problem and are much harder to teach students to correct. Your insistence on correctness will help, and if you have time to explain why the run-on is wrong, such explanations will help even more.
>
> If a student writes, in answer to a math problem, "The farmer will get a yield of sixty bushels to the acre," then you can applaud his complete sentence and tell him to keep up the good work. But if he writes "Sixty bushels," you can point out that he has written a fragment because no one really knows what he is talking about without referring to the problem. How is the sixty bushels related to the other elements of the problem? If he writes, "The farmer will get a poor yield, he will get only sixty bushels per acre," then you could try to get him to see that he really has two sentences there and encourage him to put in a period and a capital letter or a semicolon where he has the comma. Or you could show him how to combine the two ideas into one correct sentence with an appositive: "The farmer will get a poor yield, only sixty bushels per acre."

My report to the teachers concluded with thanks for their cooperation and the following plea:

> We are all teachers of our language and the skills involved in using it correctly. If we don't show students in every class, by our insistence on correct usage and our willingness to teach the special language skills required in our classes, that we think the ability to communicate well is important, then we are showing them that it is not important.

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In the fall of 1980, we conducted another writing assessment, but this time we tested twenty percent of the student body in English classes. We did not abandon the idea of all-school assessment because we thought it was unsuccessful or because we had lost faith in the value of getting everyone involved, but simply because of time requirements. This year we wanted to do an error analysis as well. To score papers for the total school population plus analyze errors in a percentage of those papers required too many teacher hours.

I am still firmly committed to the idea of at least starting an assessment program with total school involvement, even if, in subsequent years, just a percentage of students is tested. Getting all teachers and students involved is the best introduction to a renewed stress on developing writing abilities across the curriculum.

# TEACHER-TESTED RESEARCH ON WRITING

Jane Zeni Flinn
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Co-Director, Gateway Writing Project

"We learn to write by writing." "A teacher of writing must write." Such slogans capture the practical, experience-centered philosophy for which the National Writing Project is known. Most teachers who come to one of the Project's summer institutes are looking for know-how, not theoretical knowledge. They doubt the relevance of research to the classroom, resent the expensive fads of curriculum developers, and suspect the wisdom of scholars far removed from the schools.

Yet the past fifteen years have seen exciting breakthroughs in our knowledge of the writing process, knowledge which is just beginning to reach large numbers of classroom teachers. As Co-Director of St. Louis' Gateway Writing Project, I have watched dozens of teachers create their own syntheses of know-how and knowledge. The Project does not supply an all-purpose teacher-proof curriculum. Although we urge everyone to read extensively, there is no "required" reading--just a nine-page bibliography of sources "recommended" for their perusal. Teachers read the research for themselves in order to evaluate it in the light of their own experience and to adapt published curricula to suit their own teaching styles and their own students' needs. By watching the participants in four summer institutes, I have learned which studies speak directly to teachers and help them teach writing more effectively.

## WRITING AND THINKING

Once taught as a set of isolated skills aimed at producing "correct" English, writing is now recognized as a basic mode of learning (see Janet Emig, 1977). Current research suggests that children should write and read continually in all subjects, not just in English classes, if they are to grow into literate, thinking adults. Daniel Fader's report on the program that turned delinquent boys into learners, the New 'Hooked on Books' (1976), urges "English in every classroom," saturating the environment with high-interest paperbacks and journals where students record their own ideas. Nancy Martin, in Writing and Learning across the Curriculum, 11-16 (1976), shows how teachers of social studies, science, and the practical arts can enhance thinking by having their students write as well as read and speak extensively.

Poor readers may approach a textbook as passively as they would a television set—and fail to learn. Writing, however, is an active process. According to James Britton, students who took notes at a college history lecture performed significantly better on tests than a control group instructed not to write anything themselves--but to study from copies of the professor's own lecture notes (Rosen, 1978). Apparently the mere act of writing something down caused these students to become engaged with the ideas. It comes as no surprise that reading theorist Frank Smith has turned to Writing and the Writer (1981) to explore the mental processes that make literacy possible.

## DEVELOPMENT

Teachers have long been able to observe a child reading, assign an approximate grade level, and feel fairly confident that one stage of competence will precede another. We have just recently learned enough about the developmental stages in writing to measure student progress and plan learning sequences with any degree of precision.

Carol Chomsky (1971) and Donald Graves (1977, 1979-80) trace the progress of young children, showing that the drive to communicate, to write, generally precedes the desire to read someone else's writing. James Britton reports on a study of school-age writers in The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-16 (1975). He finds that children grow from "expressive" writing (unrehearsed talking-on-paper) to more deliberately shaped products in two broad categories: "transactional" (practical, informative), and "poetic" (writing as an art form); he stresses that the energy and personal commitment of expressive writing feed into both of the other modes. James Kinneavy (1969) uses the communications triangle (I-You-It, or Speaker-Audience-Subject) to classify the modes of writing as expressive (I), persuasive (You), explanatory (It), and literary (the center of the triangle). Like Britton, Kinneavy urges that students write in a variety of modes for a variety of audiences at all stages of their development.

In Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968), James Moffett provides a comprehensive model of the developmental stages and modes of writing. He applies this theory to the classroom in his Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading: A Handbook for Teachers, K-13 (rev. with B.J. Wagner, 1976), and in a new sequence of writing assignments, Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum (1981). Classroom teachers are now using developmental theory to plan their own writing courses (see Siegel, Sequences in Writing, 1980, designed by Bay Area Writing Project teachers).

## PROCESS

The most basic assumption of current researchers is that writing should be taught as a process. Most school writing programs have been more concerned with correcting bad papers than with writing good ones. This after-the-fact emphasis on the product has resulted in much student anxiety and failure. Recent research has turned instead to professional and skilled student writers to describe, step by step, how successful writers work. Beginners can be taught to follow this same process, to stick with a paper through a series of drafts to a finished product.

The literature suggests four essential kinds of activities which guide students through the entire composing process: prewriting activities, drafting/revising activities, editing activities, and evaluation activities. A Writing Guide for Missouri Schools, K-12 (1978), Koch and Brazil's

Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process (1978), and Gateway Writing Project's own Routes to Writing, K-6 (1980) are among the many current teaching aids based on this model of the writing process.

In The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (1971), Janet Emig pioneers a new research method; her students talk on tape, letting her eavesdrop while they compose. Linda Flower and John Hayes (in Gregg, 1980) call their taped composing sessions "windows on the mind," through which they can observe "cognitive information processing." These studies suggest that composing is not a linear sequence of stages, but rather a set of mental strategies which may loop back and forth or occur simultaneously: a writer may pause during a revision to plan ("prewrite") what to do next and to evaluate the editorial work.

Teachers who understand the research on the writing process can develop prewriting, drafting, editing, and evaluation activities, and teach their students the thinking strategies of effective writers.

## PREWRITING

Prewriting includes activities to build self-concept and motivation, as well as activities to generate the raw material for papers. The writer may take notes, chew a pencil, relive an event, argue with an imaginary audience, set goals, doodle, brainstorm, or outline. The only prewriting activity commonly taught in school is outlining, a strategy which organizes ideas, but unfortunately does little to help the writer find ideas. Teachers have responded enthusiastically to the research on prewriting.

Moffett (1976), Britton (1970), Gerbrandt (1974), and Spolin (1970) show teachers how to stimulate writing through dialogue and dramatic improvisation. Ken Macrorie (1971, 1973) and Peter Elbow (1973) show the value of nonstop, unedited "freewriting" and journal writing to help beginners gain fluency and confidence. Many useful "invention schemes"--charts and brain-joggers to get the ideas flowing--have been based on the theories of Young, Becker, and Pike (1970). Instead of waiting for inspiration to strike, teachers can provide structured prewriting experiences, leaving each student with pages of jotted ideas, not with a blank page and a blocked brain.

Prewriting is data-gathering. Wolfe's New Journalism (1973) saturates writers with their subjects through interviewing, sensory awareness, and the rhythm of language, while Hillocks' delightful Observing and Writing (1974) helps them see, hear, smell, taste, and feel on paper. Armed with these techniques and a notebook, students from biology to urban economics can transform the dreary library research paper into what Macrorie calls Searching Writing (1980).

## DRAFTING

Drafting is the heart of the writing process. As Don Murray (1968) says, "Writing is rewriting," and revision is not merely proofreading, but "looking again"; Murray reprints actual pages from published writers' notebooks, discussing the changes made in successive drafts. Lee Odell (1975) teaches revision with an imaginary movie camera that allows a writer to zoom in and out, experimenting with point of view.

A major task of the writer is to find an appropriate voice, or style. Fr. Walter Ong (1978) describes the styles characteristic of literate and oral cultures--including the "secondary orality" of today's electronic media. Walker Gibson (1966) classifies prose styles as Tough, Sweet, and Stuffy (1966), while Martin Joos, in The Five Clocks (1961), cites degrees of formality ranging from "intimate" to "frozen" (see also Christensen, 1967; Miles, 1979).

One of the most effective ways students can learn clarity and focus is to write for a live audience other than the teacher. Peter Elbow (1973), Thom Hawkins (1976), and Mary Healy (1979) explain the ground rules for constructive feedback and tell how to establish workshop groups in the classroom. Graves (1977) shows how brief conferences with teachers, librarians, and other adult resource people can help inexperienced writers develop their drafts.

Students of Josephine Miles learn to focus a paper by devising a one-sentence generalization, or "predication" (1979). Teachers who have drilled thesis statements find Miles intriguing because her concept is not limited to expository essays, and because she spells out the grammatical basis of the "predication" which sends a mere "subject" into action. Ann Berthoff (1977) helps writers discover generalizations amid the "chaos" of opposing ideas and details; her system, while it seems complicated, works as well with critical reading as with critical writing.

Most teachers do not allow enough time for students to work through quantities of jotted material, devise a consistent voice, audience, and purpose, and achieve a coherent draft. With the aid of an overhead projector, ditto machine, and the research, teachers can help writers at all levels learn to revise, not merely recopy.

## EDITING

Teachers, parents, and researchers may engage in politically-charged debates over the relevance of grammar study to writing (see Sheils, 1975). Over sixty years of research have failed to uncover any direct link between the learning of grammatical concepts and improvement in writing skills (Elley, 1975). At the same time, students must gain control of usage, syntax, and mechanics. Constance Weaver's Grammar for Teachers (1979) and Martha Kolln's "Closing the Books on Alchemy" (1981) help sort through the confusion. With a knowledge of the writing process, teachers can teach grammar effectively--not in isolation, but as a set of strategies for polishing written work.

Several recent approaches help students acquire a more adult writing style, based on Kellogg Hunt's (1975) measures of syntactic maturity.

Francis and Bonniejean Christensen (1966, 1967, 1979) use sentences by professional writers as models to discuss and imitate. Sentence combining, devised by Mellon (1969), O'Hare (1973, 1975), and Strong (1972, 1976), has quickly become a mainstay of the language arts curriculum in thousands of classes. Unlike diagramming or labelling, sentence combining has a measurable impact on the quality of writing.

In her brilliant study Errors and Expectations (1977), Mina Shaughnessy explains mechanical errors as necessary, but correctible, stages in learning. Her method of error analysis was developed with the barely-literate adults entering New York's open-admissions colleges. For many writers, editing involves shifting from the grammar of their home dialect to the grammar of standard English; their teachers will find Burling's English in Black and White (1973), as well as Labov (1970, 1972) and Arthur (1973), invaluable.

Too often the editing process is cut short. Writers need a purpose and an audience for their work, and some form of publication is a highly effective way to teach editing skills. Landrum (1971), Moffett (1976), and Wuertenberg (1980) show how young authors can bind, illustrate, and present their writing to the public.

## EVALUATION

For most teachers, evaluation means grading. Yet professional writers constantly evaluate their work, getting feedback from trusted readers as they prepare their manuscripts for publication. If writing is taught as a process, students benefit from this kind of formative evaluation through peer workshops and brief teacher conferences.

Yet feedback remains a problem. Researchers almost unanimously agree that students should write much more than teachers with typical classloads can possibly correct. Since other studies suggest that intensive correction leads more to writing anxiety than to writing skill, teachers have welcomed the practical alternatives in Stanford's collection, How to Handle the Paperload (1979).

Major breakthroughs have occurred in writing assessment. Today we can obtain statistically reliable data on the quality of whole pieces of writing through holistic scoring, developed for the College Entrance Examination Board (Diederich, 1974), and primary trait scoring, developed for the National Assessment of Education Progress (Mellon, 1975; Klaus, 1979). The National Writing Project has made these methods available to classroom teachers, who are now being trained to conduct their own schoolwide and districtwide assessments of writing. Such teachers often give out scoring guides, called rubrics, along with their own assignments, letting their students know exactly how their papers will be evaluated.

A Writing Guide for Missouri Schools shows how all these forms of evaluation can work together (see also Cooper and Odell, 1977). Teachers can, for example, start with a thorough diagnosis of one paper, based on

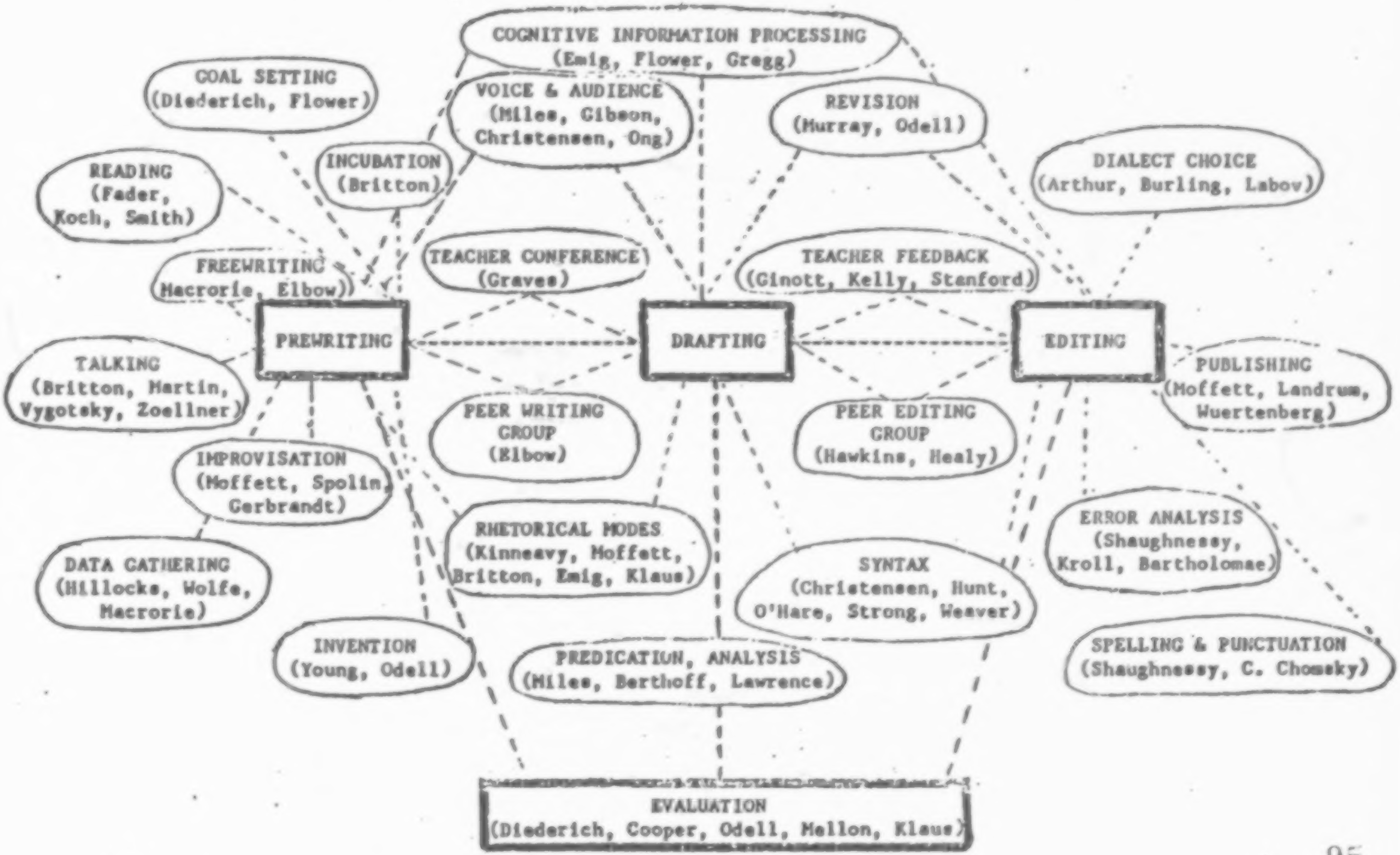
Shaughnessy's error analysis. They can record a holistic grade for this paper, for two or three others during the term, and for a final paper. The rest of the time they can pocket their red pens and respond to the writing constructively: praising a sparkling sentence, asking editorial questions, coaching workshop groups, crediting folders of ungraded practice work, setting clear criteria for grading, and regarding all papers as drafts until published.

## RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

The divorce of theory and practice has had a disastrous effect on the teaching of writing. Teachers have labelled the scholarship irrelevant, yet their own curricula were developed by scholars long removed from the classroom. Through the writing project, I have seen teachers turn that abstract, academic knowledge into the know-how of the writing classroom.

Their framework of knowledge acquired in the writing project provides a set of "hooks" to grasp new ideas and place them in context, to evaluate the latest methods and know the fads from the breakthroughs. These teachers can discuss writing confidently with colleagues, administrators, parents, and politicians because they have not merely accepted a list of principles from an "expert." They have talked and read and written and struggled until they don't just know "how." They know *why*.

# MODEL OF THE TEACHING AND WRITING PROCESS


COGNITIVE INFORMATION PROCESSING (Emig, Flower, Gregg)
GOAL SETTING (Diederich, Flower)
VOICE & AUDIENCE (Miles, Gibson, Christensen, Ong)
REVISION (Murray, Odell)
READING (Fader, Koch, Smith)
INCUBATION (Britton)
DIALECT CHOICE (Arthur, Burling, Labov)
FREEWRITING (Macrorie, Elbow)
TEACHER CONFERENCE (Graves)
TEACHER FEEDBACK (Ginott, Kelly, Stanford)
PREWRITING
DRAFTING
EDITING
TALKING (Britton, Martin, Vygotsky, Zoellner)
PEER WRITING GROUP (Elbow)
PEER EDITING GROUP (Hawkins, Healy)
PUBLISHING (Moffett, Landrum, Wuertenberg)
IMPROVISATION (Moffett, Spolin, Gerbrandt)
ERROR ANALYSIS (Shaughnessy, Kroll, Bartholomae)
RHETORICAL MODES (Kinneavy, Moffett, Britton, Emig, Klaus)
DATA GATHERING (Hillocks, Wolfe, Macrorie)
SYNTAX (Christensen, Hunt, O'Hare, Strong, Weaver)
SPELLING & PUNCTUATION (Shaughnessy, C. Chomsky)
INVENTION (Young, Odell)
PREDICATION, ANALYSIS (Miles, Berthoff, Lawrence)
EVALUATION (Diederich, Cooper, Odell, Mellon, Klaus)

Jane Flinn/ Judith Shook
Gateway Writing Project, St. Louis
(Rev. BAWP, 1980; rev. GWP, 1981)

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## RESOURCES

Gateway Writing Project materials and information may be ordered from:

Gateway Writing Project--Att. Jane Flinn
English Dept., Lucas Hall
University of Missouri-St. Louis
8001 Natural Bridge Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63121

Bay Area Writing Project and National Writing Project curriculum monographs may be ordered from:

Bay Area Writing Project, Publications Dept.
5635 Tolman Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Language Arts (elementary), English Journal (junior/senior high), College English and College Composition and Communication may be ordered from:

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

Journal of Basic Writing (college/adult) may be ordered from:

Instructional Resources Center
City University of New York
535 East 80th Street
New York, NY 10021

Social Education may be ordered from:

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
3615 Wisconsin Ave. N. W.
Washington, DC 20016

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